ARCADE

Issue 37.1 | Winter 2019 | $10

Tech Observer
Reclaiming Creativity from the Machine-Learning Beast
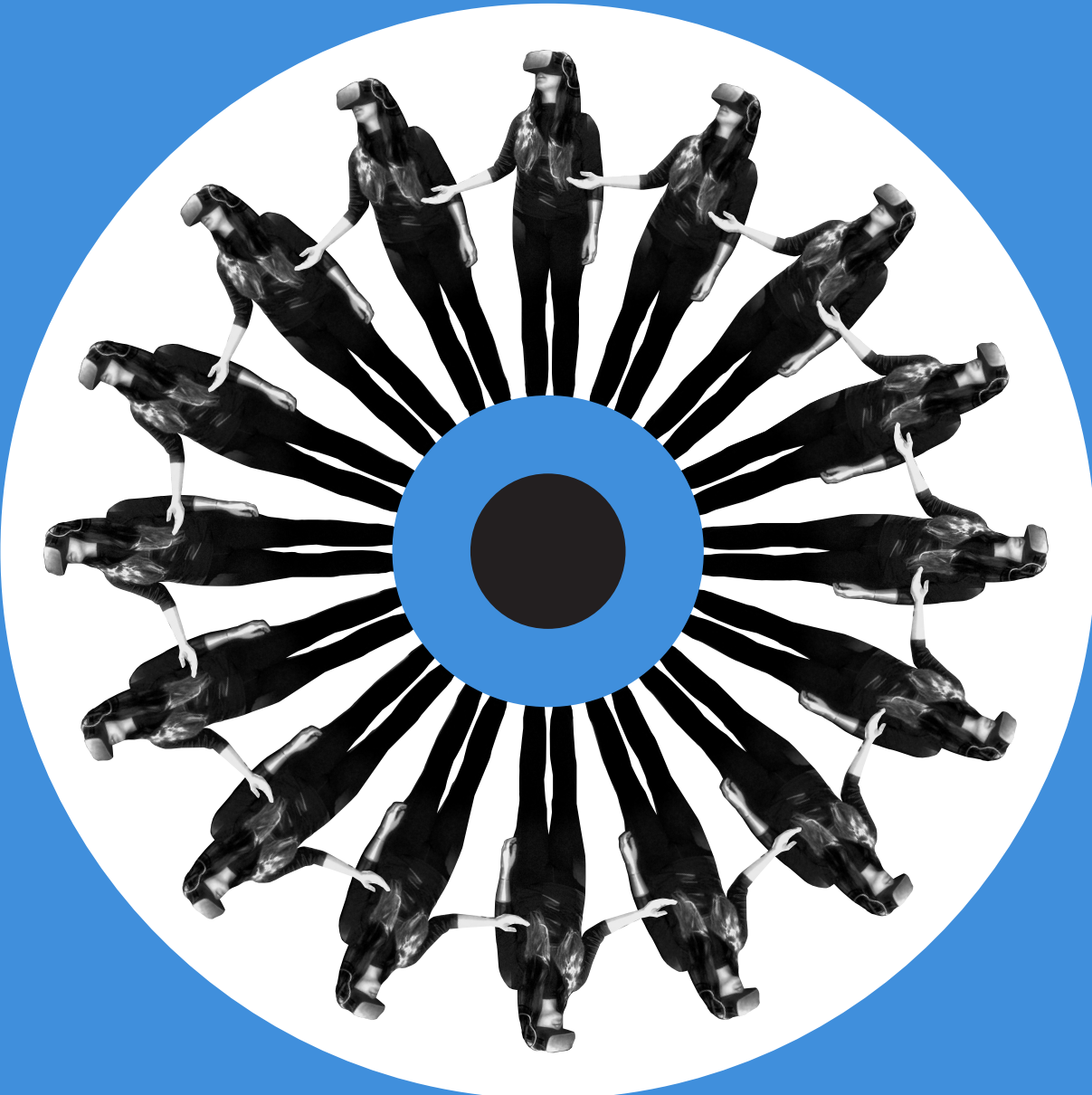By Sheryl Cababa

Urban Design Observer
Urbanites' Notebook: Thoughts from City Dwellers on Urban Spaces
By Amy Lindemuth

Books
On *Gordon Walker: A Poetic Architecture*:
Coming Summer 2019, ARCADE Publications
A Conversation Edited by Andrew van Leeuwen

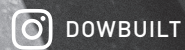# THE SIMULATED METROPOLIS:
ART AND IDENTITY WITHIN THE NETWORK

Feature Editor: Leah St. Lawrence

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PARTNERS / CRAFTSMEN

SCHUCHART/DOW IS NOW DOWBUILT.
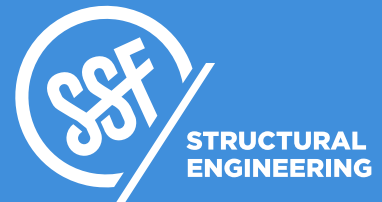NEW NAME. SAME GREAT CRAFTSMEN.

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A LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

By Kelly Rodriguez

Dear ARCADE Community,
It is with a heavy heart that after over 18 years I prepare to take my leave from ARCADE. This spring, I will be concluding my role as the organization's executive director/editor and embarking on a new adventure in our rich, Pacific Northwest design community.

I joined the organization as its first employee in mid-2000; Victoria Reed was the managing editor (with less than a year left in that role), and friends like Liz Dunn, Tom Bosworth, Barbara Slack, and Ron van der Veen were members of the ARCADE Board of Trustees. Thanks to Barbara's and Ron's affiliations with Mithun, the firm offered to host ARCADE's one-woman operation. Nearly two decades later we are still ensconced on the waterfront in their beautiful office and now boast a whopping staff of three employees, including myself, Erin Kendig, and Michael Schuler. Mithun has been such a generous patron and partner; I am eternally grateful for their kindness and generosity to ARCADE and to me for so many years.

I came to ARCADE with a background in ballet and art history, and a bachelor and master of architecture; I brought my conviction that architecture, design, and their allied disciplines comprise the world as we know it, and that if we limit our understanding of these professions — these art forms — to their most common components, we do ourselves a profound disservice. Therefore, over the last 18 years we have featured stories on architecture, urbanism, art, identity, policy/politics, photography, landscape (agrarian, pastoral, digital, etc.), graphic design, cinema, graphic novels, food, fashion, furniture, waste, science, water, air, communication, education, STEAM, data, modernism, social innovation, leadership, authenticity, creativity, influence, migration, environmentalism, the Anthropocene, and everything in between. We have worked to create accessible editorial (although, as with any magazine, not every article has appealed to every reader) that tells stories that reveal something new or that corroborate our readers' own convictions.

I want to express how much of a privilege and luxury it has been to collaborate with so many talented professionals — a cadre of writers, artists, photographers, a rotating board of trustees, editorial committee
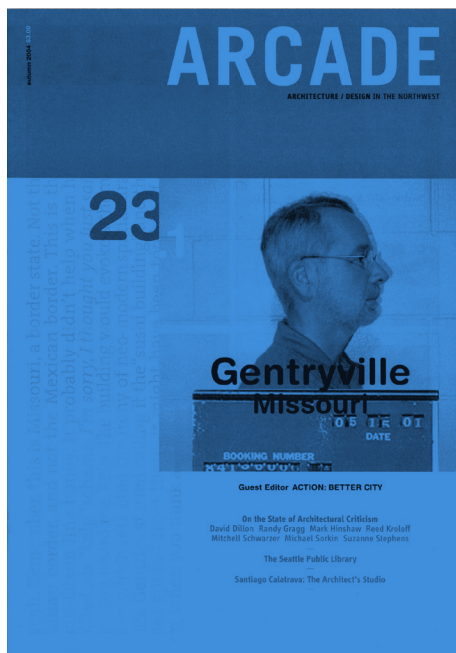
A few of Kelly's favorite covers and issues: 23.1, autumn 2004, Gentryville, Missouri, *feature edited by Action: Better City, designed by Annabelle Gould.*

24.2, winter 2005, The Desire Issue, *featured edited by Kelly Rodriguez, designed by RMB Vivid.*
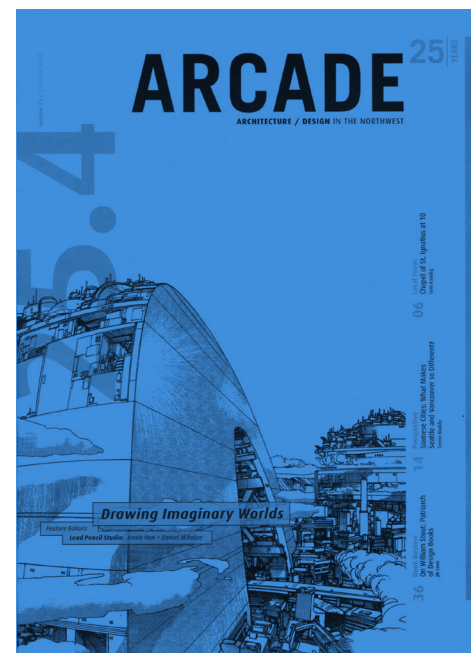
25.4, summer 2007, Drawing Imaginary Worlds, *feature edited by Lead Pencil Studio, designed by Push Design.*

members, volunteers, event venue hosts, general contractors (who have helped with many events), staff, and designers. Speaking of designers, because we engage a new designer for each volume of ARCADE, I have had the distinct pleasure of working with many talented artists — and, it's not lost on me that the first one I collaborated with, Karen Cheng, is a strict modernist, as are the last two I will work with, Sean Wolcott and Andre Meca of Rationale Design. Every designer has taught me so much about the graphic arts, with each playing a significant role in my continuing education.

ARCADE has benefited from a fairly unchanging staff for most of my tenure. After my daughter was born in May 2002, the board and I decided to split the roles of editor and business manager (I previously performed both), and I assumed the editorial lead. For the next several years a few colleagues came and went, but one consistent player has been Erin Kendig. During her 13 years with ARCADE, Erin has done just about everything involved with running the organization and has been our longtime managing editor. During this period Erin also graduated from the University of Washington with a degree in English literature, from Seattle Central with a degree in graphic design, and is now pursuing her passion and talents as an artist and illustrator (take a look at erinkendig.com). In 2011, when I assumed the new role of executive director, Erin joined me full-time and together — along with many many many generous supporters — we transformed ARCADE; I can't name everyone here but Brian Boram; Boaz Ashkenazy; Ricky Castro, Jim Catel, and Andi Rusu (If/Then); and Scott Thiessen played significant roles. It is inconceivable that I could have done my job, that ARCADE would be where it is today, without Erin's involvement; I am so grateful that she has been my partner these many years.

The ARCADE Board of Trustees has played a tireless role in ARCADE's existence — as fundraisers, donors, party planners/hosts, and so much more, and they have helped ARCADE weather innumerable financial storms, including the 2008 financial crisis. Since there have been so many members over the years, I regretfully am unable to thank each individually here, but suffice it to say that like ARCADE's staff, the organization would not be alive and well without their time, energy, and generous support.
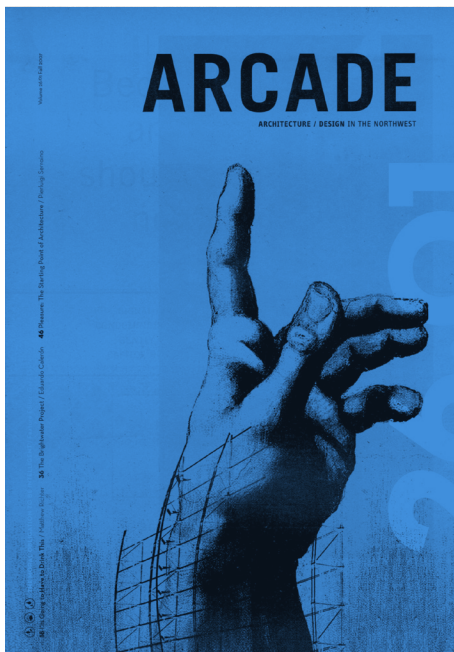
26.1, autumn 2007, The Moral Obligation to be Intelligent, *feature edited by Gary Lawrence, designed by Jim Nesbitt and Stephanie Cooper.*

28.4, summer 2010, Fire, Start Me Up*, feature edited by Kelly Rodriguez, designed by Somelab.*
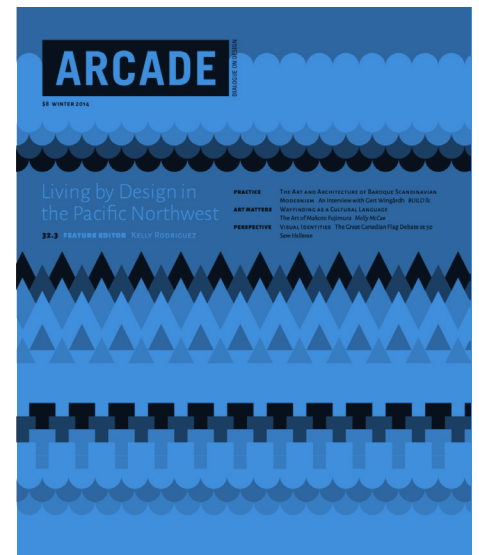
32.3, winter 2014, Living By Design in the Pacific Northwest, *feature edited by Kelly Rodriguez, designed by Tom Eykemans.*

ARCADE is a labor of love for many; running a small arts nonprofit organization is not for the faint of heart, and ARCADE would simply not exist without the patronage of our loyal donor and advertiser communities who have stuck with us through thin and thick. To these allies, my gratitude to you is deep.

ARCADE's future leaders have yet to be named, but I am certain that with the continuing support of its vast community, including you, dear reader, it will thrive beautifully — oh, and look for ARCADE's first book publication in July: *Gordon Walker: A Poetic Architecture*, by Grant Hildebrand, handsomely designed by Lucia|Marquand.

Today, my daughter Gemma is closing in on 17 and looking to college; for her entire life she's only known me as ARCADE, which has been a wonderful and privileged identity to own. And now, for my next chapter …

With much love and optimism,

Kelly

Kelly Rodriguez
Executive Director/Editor

ARCADE
the journal for architecture and design in the northwest
autumn 2001 volume 20 number 1

$6

the idea
of regionalism

guest editor john cava
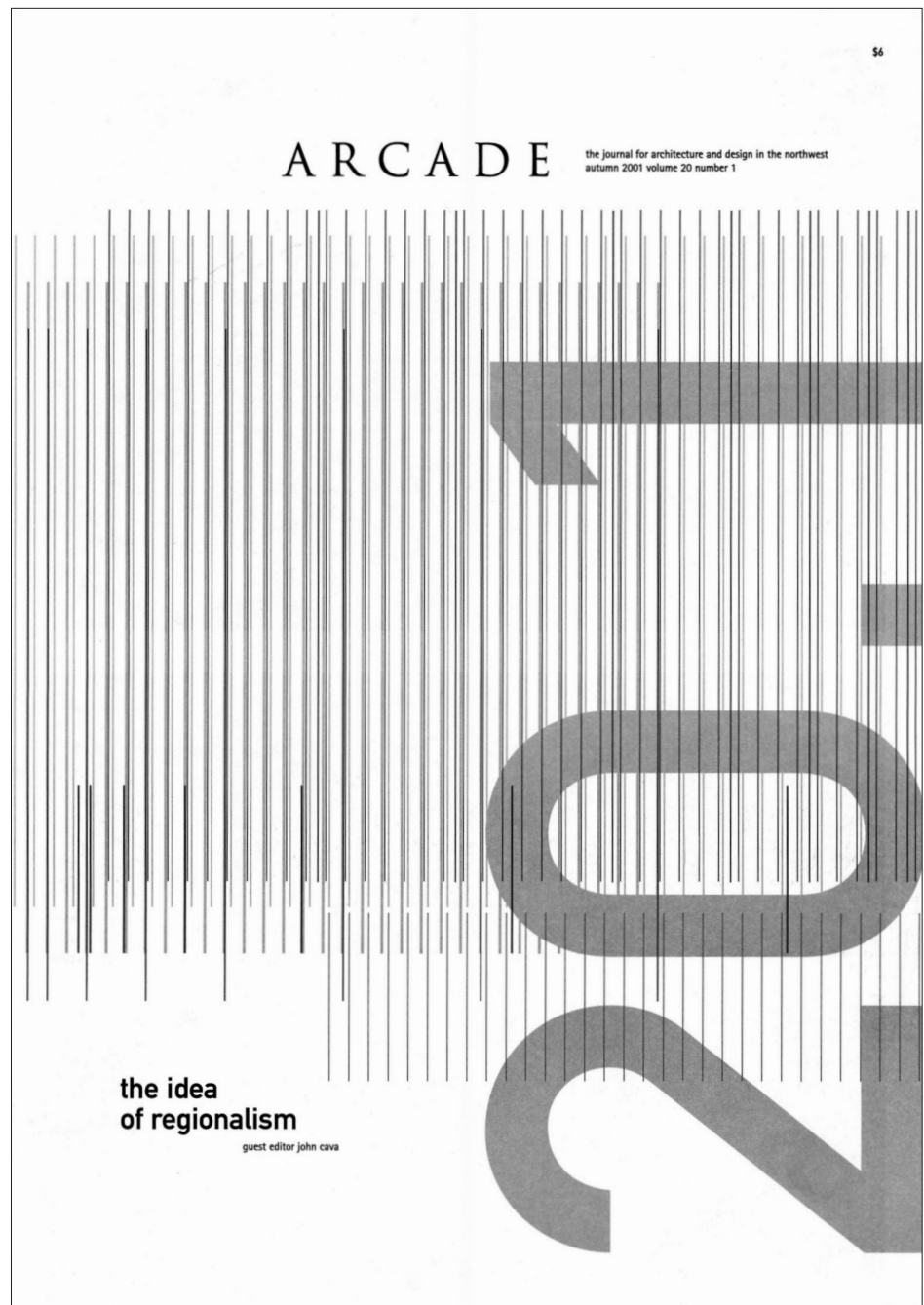
Where it all began—Kelly's first issue of ARCADE: 20.1, autumn 2001, The Idea of Regionalism, *featured edited by John Cava, designed by Karen Cheng.*

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FORGOTTEN BUT NOT GONE: BURIEN'S TRADEWELL STORE

By Jeffrey Karl Ochsner

1956–2019

Above and opposite, top: Tradewell store in Burien, February 1957. Images courtesy of University of Washington Libraries, Special Collections [Pearson 8572-42D] / [Pearson 8572-41] / [Pearson 8572-42E]

Opposite, bottom: Now a Grocery Outlet, the Tradewell building's original thin-shell roof is visible behind the missing awning at the right. Photo by Jennifer Papuga.
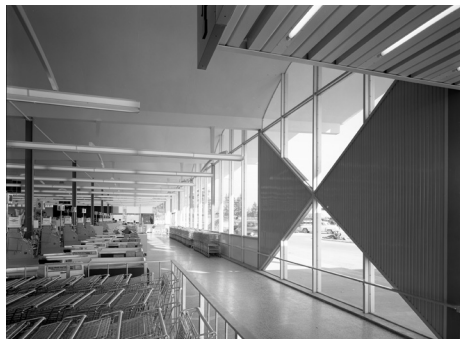
In 1959 a grocery store in Burien won a national AIA Merit Award. The previous year, the store received national attention as the subject of an article in *Progressive Architecture*, and subsequently it was briefly mentioned in *Pacific Architect & Builder*. Designed by the office of Welton Becket for the Tradewell chain, the store was notable for its roof of thin-shell concrete saddleback barrel vaults and its all-glass front. Today, while the building survives, it has largely been forgotten. It is still a grocery store, but its award-winning design is no longer apparent.

The Burien Tradewell was intended as the first of several new stores in the chain's expansion that was planned by Monte Lafayette Bean (1899–1982). In 1939, Bean became the president of the struggling Eba Mutual Grocery stores. Initiating a program of modernization, Monte Bean closed some stores and reconfigured others and chose the name Tradewell Modern Food Stores to signal the new direction. Within a few years, the chain returned to profitability. In the postwar years, Tradewell regularly added new stores to respond to suburban development.

When construction of the Burien Tradewell began in July 1956, Bean called the design "revolutionary." The following February, to celebrate the store opening, Tradewell published full-page advertisements in Seattle papers touting the modern architecture, claiming it was "so advanced in design that all of our friends in the Puget Sound Area should know about it."

The announcements also highlighted the designer, "the nationally known architectural firm" Welton Becket & Associates. Welton Becket (1902–1969) was born in Seattle and received his architectural degree from the University of Washington in 1927. Although he initially opened a practice in Seattle, by 1933 he had relocated to Los Angeles where he entered into a partnership with UW classmate Walter Wurdeman and Los Angeles architect Charles Plummer. Following the unexpected deaths of Plummer in 1939 and Wurdeman in 1949, he reorganized the firm as Welton Becket & Associates. Over the next two decades, the practice was responsible for notable modern works and became one of the largest and best known design firms in Los Angeles.

It is not known why Bean selected California-based Welton Becket as Tradewell's designer. At the time, architects in Seattle were working with local structural engineers, particularly Jack Christiansen and Peter Hostmark, creating innovative buildings with thin-shell concrete roofs. Still, it's possible Bean saw Becket's Los Angeles

WHEN CONSTRUCTION OF THE BURIEN TRADEWELL BEGAN IN JULY 1956, BEAN CALLED THE DESIGN "REVOLUTIONARY."

architecture as more attuned to the emerging car-oriented suburban culture than contemporaneous work by Seattle designers, and Tradewell committed to Becket for its new look. Becket was responsible for the remodel of the Crown Hill Tradewell that opened in September 1956. The Burien store was the firm's first completely new Tradewell. The partnership Rushmore & Woodman, based in Bellevue, was the local supervising architect; John Rushmore and Jack Woodman were UW architecture graduates of the late 1940s. The structural engineer for Becket's designs was Richard Bradshaw (b. 1916), an expert in thin-shell and other unusual concrete structures, who was responsible for many expressive designs for leading southern California modernists.

The Burien Tradewell measures 160 by 140 feet; eight saddleback thin-shell vaults, each 20 feet wide, extend from front to back, supported on steel columns and cantilevering 12 feet beyond the glazed storefront to shelter the adjacent sidewalk. The dramatic character of the front elevation was originally further enhanced by a tall pylon sign over the primary entrance. In May 1959, after the Burien store's design received national recognition, Monte Bean suggested that 30 additional stores based on the Burien design could be built. However, only three were actually constructed: stores in Richmond Beach (1956–57, altered, now Rite Aid), Kenmore (1957, destroyed), and Columbia City (1957–58, destroyed). By mid-1959, Tradewell began constructing new stores with conventional roofs. The Becket office designed one such store in Wedgwood (1959, altered, now QFC), but thereafter received no more store commissions. As noted by local author Rob Ketcherside in a blog post about the Tradewell store, some later locations retained the signature arches over the front walkway but omitted the thin-shell roof. By the end of 1959, Monte Bean had resigned from the company.

Washington-based Tradewell survived as an independent company until 1988. Thereafter, individual stores passed

to other owners. Today, the Burien Tradewell is a Grocery Outlet. The tall pylon sign has been reduced in height and a continuous canopy conceals the cantilevered arches over the front sidewalk. Likely few patrons realize this store was once considered a notable example of advanced design. ■

Jeffrey Karl Ochsner is a professor in the Department of Architecture at the University of Washington who currently serves as associate dean in the College of Built Environments. He thanks Robert Pearson for granting permission to reproduce photographs of the Burien Tradewell taken by his father Charles Pearson in the late 1950s.

RECLAIMING CREATIVITY FROM THE MACHINE-LEARNING BEAST

By Sheryl Cababa

In the past few months, a curious set of buttons has appeared at the base of my Gmail messages. They are canned replies to whatever text the software has detected in the preceding email, clickable responses like "I'm interested" or "sounds good!"

I laughed when I first saw them because they seemed so absurd: I can't fathom feeling inconvenienced by typing "sounds good!" just to literally save five seconds. They've since gone even further with their "Smart Compose" feature, which actually autocompletes your sentences within the email itself. Why do technologists consider this such a high priority?

Humans are creatures of habit. Last June, the *Economist* noted a study from the Technical University of Denmark that showed that, at any given time, people tend to have no more than two dozen regular haunts. I'm sure Google Maps knows every one of mine and autopopulates when I type. I've already outsourced my navigation skills, my

calendar-remembering, and my photo-tagging to Google, and now they are encouraging me to outsource my words.

Google's new text feature may not appeal to me, but other sorts of algorithmically determined services do. We have to remind ourselves, however, that these digital tools bring more than convenience. Every time we use a button that says "sounds good!" we are also feeding the machine-learning beast, increasing the likelihood that the software will present us, and others, with more of the same in the future. As we narrow our expression, give way to our predictability, the small ways in which we seek convenience can be death by a thousand paper cuts to other qualities we crave as humans — individualism, serendipity, discovery.
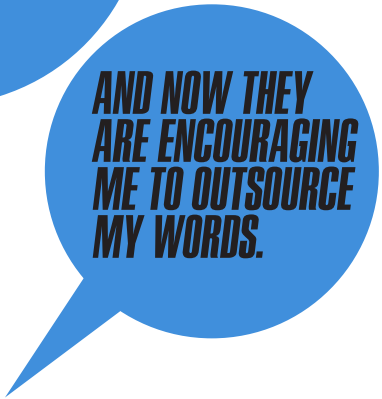
We need to ask ourselves: What are we exchanging for convenience?

I'VE ALREADY OUTSOURCED MY NAVIGATION SKILLS,

MY CALENDAR-REMEMBERING, AND MY PHOTO-TAGGING TO GOOGLE,

AND NOW THEY ARE ENCOURAGING ME TO OUTSOURCE MY WORDS.

Stuck in a Loop

At the moment, we're caught in a feedback loop, with algorithms and machine learning each playing a role to further consolidate our experiences and expression, and our personal spaces are converging into a milquetoast mass. As Kyle Chayka, a writer for the *Verge*, pointed out in "Welcome to Airspace," our physical spaces have succumbed to the Airbnb aesthetic: "Minimalist furniture. Craft beer and avocado toast. Reclaimed wood. Industrial lighting. Cortados. Fast internet. The homogeneity of these spaces means that traveling between them is frictionless, a value that Silicon Valley prizes." Just as Google reads our email and determines the likeliest way that we'll respond, the Airbnb platform algorithmically surfaces the most popular — and least unique — aesthetic, furthering its popularity.

Similarly, the same feedback loop — an aesthetic becomes popular, a platform emphasizes it, people mimic said aesthetic — affects our individual photographic expression, rendering it both predictable and indistinguishable. The wonderful Instagram account @ insta_repeat is unsettling with its multiple examples of young, hip, white people sitting in canoes, holding coffee, and staring off into the distance at the mountains.

We are collectively feeding a system that chews up creative input and spits it out in a prioritized fashion, with click rates motivating people to imitate the most popular expression. In an article on SFMoMA's *Open Space*, Joe Veix refers to "the YouTube face," which is an exaggerated facial expression "making everyone look like extras in a Soundgarden music video." It appears in the thumbnail images for all the most popular videos, creating instantaneous clickbait. The YouTube face is the result of us attempting to game the algorithm for clicks. The irony is that this very expression is actually the algorithm gaming our culture.

Design for Serendipity Rather than Convenience

We are meeting the machines where they are. On the *Radiolab* episode "More or Less Human," Robert Krulwich describes this as feeling like "a slow downward slide." So how do we, as designers, respond? Can we break the feedback loop?

What if we made a concerted effort to deprioritize efficiency and predictability and built sensations of surprise, randomness, and serendipity into our experiences instead? What if we designed to preserve what is unique about places and experiences? What if we made an effort to encourage our individual self-expression and that of people who use our products?

And how do we ourselves stay creative and curious and encourage others to do so?

We can find inspiration in unlikely places. For example, I love the creativity that emerges from "risky playgrounds," a concept in which children are given tools (saws! hammers!) and materials in order to build their own play spaces.

AS HUMANS, WE NEED TO LEARN, TO BE CREATIVE, TO CONNECT UNLIKELY THINGS. WE NEED TO BE UNCOMFORTABLE.

It's a celebration of ingenuity, of spontaneity, whereas the algorithms produced by big tech are pushing us toward homogeneity and standardization.

And I take solace in the idea that humans are random beings who can still confound the system. A case in point: The *Invisibilia* episode "The Pattern Problem" follows Princeton researcher Matt Salganik as he tests whether a computer can analyze patterns in life events to predict GPAs by age 15. Despite having access to a robust data set, the computer fails miserably. It's evidence that we have this randomness in us — yes, we're unpredictable! — we just need to actively harness it to fight the sameness that technology platforms are steering us toward.

Shortly before his untimely death, Anthony Bourdain, hero of curiosity and discovery, was interviewed by Maria Bustillos in *Popula*. Referring to people who follow the detailed visits from his show, he said, "I much prefer people who just showed up in Paris and found their own way without any particular itinerary, who left themselves open to things happening."

The prescriptiveness with which we've designed our lives results in a less fearful existence but also a less human one. As humans, we need to learn, to be creative, to connect unlikely things. We need to be uncomfortable.

So let's stop feeding the machine-learning beast. Take control of your own expression instead of letting the Google machine take over your keyboard. Let's leave ourselves open to things happening. ∎

Sheryl Cababa is an executive creative director at Artefact. She helps designers spark their creativity by leading workshops in sketching, UX design, and design research methods.
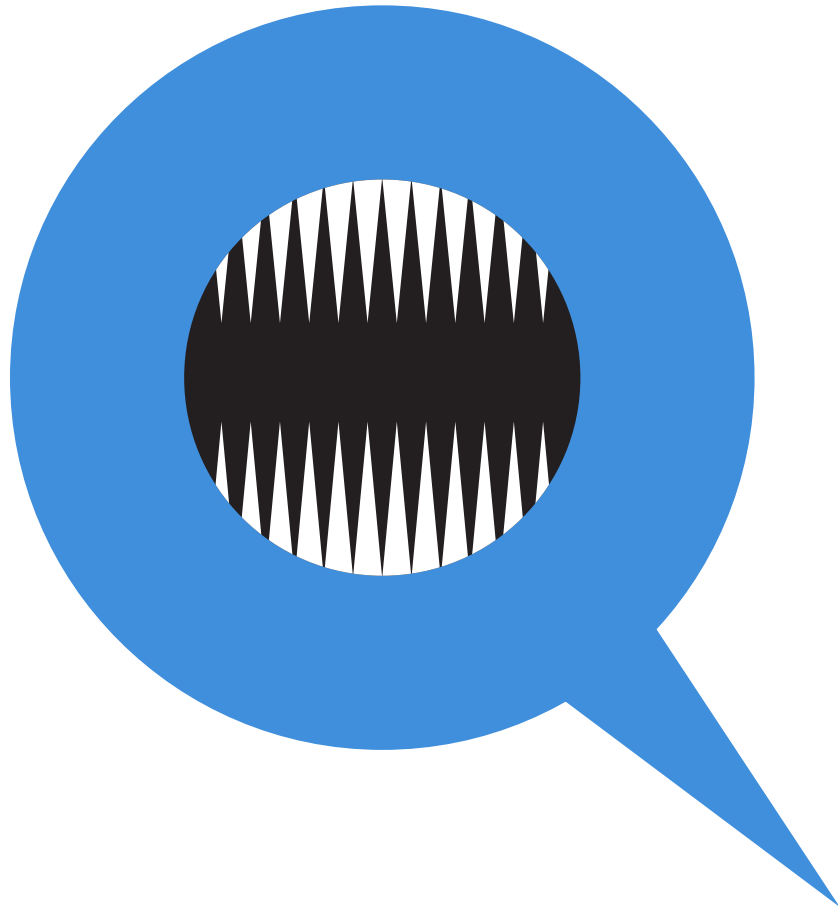
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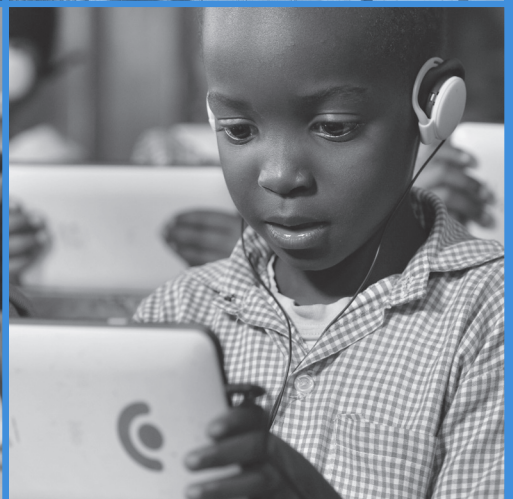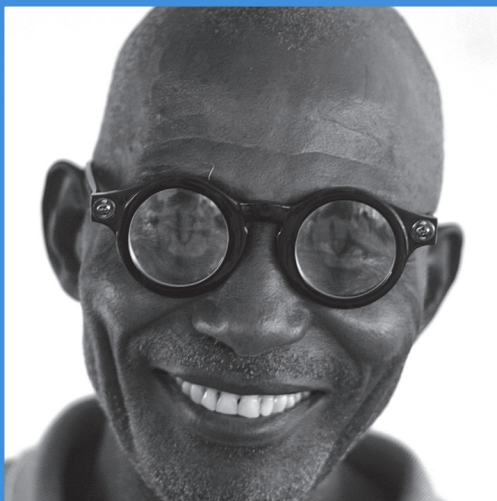
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UNDERSTANDING THE POSSIBILITY OF A SUSTAINABLE CITY

An Interview with A-P Hurd
By BUILD llc

BUILD: You teach a class on land economics and public policy at the University of Washington. What are the most important skills for your students to take away from that course?

A-P Hurd: The first is the ability to take what they've read or what someone else has produced and push it through the prism of their own life experience. This allows them to come up with true insights about how to make the world work better — to propose different ways to understand challenges or present information to the public in order to produce more effective results.

The second is related to communication. We practice "flipped classroom-learning," in which students do a lot of the "absorbing information" outside of school and then apply it in class. We write articles and blogs because they are short and it forces them to sharpen their ideas. This allows students to become agents of change and build the confidence to stake out political territory around what they believe. The final assignment is to publish an op-ed in a newspaper, write a post for a public blog, or go down to Olympia and meet with their legislator about a bill. For the rest of their lives, these students understand that getting published or going to Olympia is a possibility. They understand that if you disagree with something, you can take action.

What role does the automobile play in your life?

I've never had a car, and I have a deal with my daughter that she can participate in any sports she wants as long as she can get there on foot. There are lots of things that are really good about children getting around a city on their own. John Medina, who wrote the book *Brain Rules*, also wrote *Brain Rules for Baby*, which is about how children's brains develop. One thing from the book that really stuck with me is that when children roam they develop mental maps of the geography around them and understand how places connect to each other. He discovered that children who roamed more were not only better at understanding geography their entire lives, but later in life they were better able to relate and connect ideas and concepts.

How do your beliefs at a macro level, like the goals of a carbon-efficient city, influence how you live your individual, day-to-day life?

On occasion, I have conducted different household experiments that benefit the environment. Once, for two weeks, I decided not to buy anything that had plastic in it. It turns out that you cannot buy toothpaste without plastic, and if you want to buy toilet paper without plastic, you can only buy one roll at a time. You can find most other things without plastic if you really work at it.

I'm curious about how we can live in more sustainable patterns, and so I'm willing to put energy into it. On the other hand, sometimes it's discouraging to try hard and realize that other people aren't and that the system is set up for so much waste. If I walk to the bus in the pouring rain and a big pickup truck goes by with only the driver in it, I feel like: "Shew! All this effort isn't making much of a difference!" Also, I find it so frustrating when people idle in parked cars. It isn't even producing any value for them. Sometimes I ask them to turn off their car, which is definitely embarrassing for anyone walking with me. But isn't it the same as littering, even if the CO_2 is invisible?

In the foreword to your book, *The Carbon Efficient City*, Denis Hayes highlights six cities, two of which are Seattle neighbors: Portland and Vancouver, BC. What are these urban environments doing better than Seattle?

Everyone loves to romanticize Portland. The city does have a really good transit system, but their ridership is lower than ours on a percentage basis. Their bike ridership is a lot higher, but it's flat there, and we can't compete with that topography in Seattle. They also have smaller blocks, which everyone loves to talk about. Portland is lovely, and we should applaud them without getting a Scandinavia complex about the city.

Vancouver, on the other hand, is kind of a hot mess because of unusual forces shaping its housing market. The city has had a huge real estate boom from foreign investment, but at the same time, they don't have the fundamental economic drivers that

Seattle does or the depth of economic vitality. Vancouver has affordability challenges that are quite possibly worse than Seattle's. In response, they are creating a complex tax code that I'm not confident will yield the desired result. Across British Columbia, the new residential taxes and taxes for foreign owners are not always well designed, and they are not being uniformly implemented, and that's creating some emergent problems.

Are there ideas about cities and urban design that we need to move on from in order to create true sustainability?
Definitely. People need to stop thinking that they are entitled to parking on city streets. Sumner, a community about 30 miles south of Seattle, provides a good example. The city has a commuter rail station, and due to limited space in its parking lot, a lot of riders were using street parking. Sumner residents who lived near the station became frustrated, and they persuaded the city council to pass a law so that only Sumner residents could have a parking sticker for city streets, even though the rail station accommodates a much broader population. Now all the people who live outside of Sumner and were accessing rail transportation by parking on the streets are no longer allowed to. So, guess where they are now? In their cars on I-5. This impacts the entire region, it impacts global sustainability, and there are no consequences for Sumner. The idea that people and cities exist without responsibility to the communities and land use around them is well past its sell-by date.

How can a city like Seattle find commonality between the design and development community's interest in higher density and neighborhoods that are density averse? What are the fundamental issues here?
The city has done an exceptional job with their public outreach pertaining to density and affordable housing. They've been incredibly open-minded with a deep desire to listen. But these are issues of hope, fear, and emotion. I find that the people who are unhappy with the solutions aren't actually unhappy with the particulars; rather, they're unhappy about the fact that

THE IDEA THAT PEOPLE AND CITIES EXIST WITHOUT RESPONSIBILITY TO THE COMMUNITIES AND LAND USE AROUND THEM IS WELL PAST ITS SELL-BY DATE.

Seattle is changing. What they love is going to change, and it's going to become something they don't love because it doesn't exist yet.

I think there's a temperamental difference between people who are more comfortable with ambiguity, and therefore more hopeful, and people who are uncomfortable with uncertainty, and subsequently more pessimistic. You might expect people who have had more things go wrong in their lives and more missed opportunities to be most uncomfortable with change and ambiguity, but it really seems to cut across class in a way that's surprising. People who own homes in Wallingford are perhaps the most upset of all, and when it comes to their asset base, they are actually doing way better than the national average.

What aspects of the city's land-use codes would you like to change?
Number one, I'd like to remove any requirements for off-street parking. If it's a pain in the ass to have a car, then people will think harder about whether they want one. This isn't just a sustainability issue; it's also an affordability issue because new people coming into our neighborhoods shouldn't have to pay a lot more for their housing because the city's codes force the inclusion of expensive subterranean parking.

Second, I think it's important to create more flexibility in our single-family zones. People who build an ADU should be able to monetize it by selling it as a separate lot. Also, if people are going to be allowed to build 3,000-square-foot houses on single-family lots (which they currently are), why not allow that same structure to be a for-sale or for-rent duplex or triplex so that we could house more people?

How do you recommend that design professionals educate society about the difference between greenwashing and true sustainability?
Ah, that's a tall order. OK, here's a rule of thumb: First, always focus on impact. Second, if there is any uncertainty about impact, just buy less crap. ■

A-P Hurd is the president of SkipStone and the former president of Touchstone. She is also a faculty member and Runstad Fellow in the College of Built Environments at the University of Washington, where she teaches a course on land economics and public policy. She is on the board of the Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce and co-chairs the chamber's policy leadership group. A-P is also on the boards of the Pacific Real Estate Institute and CityBldr. She was the 2014 president of NAIOP Washington and published The Carbon Efficient City *with the University of Washington Press in 2012.*

BUILD llc is an industrious architecture firm in Seattle run by Kevin Eckert, Andrew van Leeuwen, Bart Gibson, and Carey Moran. The firm's work focuses on effective, sustainable, and sensible design. BUILD llc operates an architectural office, contributes to ARCADE with an ongoing interview series, and is most known for their cultural leadership on the BUILD Blog *(blog.buildllc.com). BUILD intern Ariel Scholten contributed to this ARCADE interview.*

Page 22: Photo by Christiana Childers Photography (christianachilders.com)

Left: The Carbon Efficient City *by A-P Hurd and Al Hurd.*

A-P HURD + AL HURD
FOREWORD BY DENIS HAYES

THE CARBON EFFICIENT CITY

SMARTER. BETTER. TOGETHER.
Together we challenge the status quo, and create better outcomes.

G·L·Y

JANINE PIETZ, GLY MARKETING

South Whidbey Island
Residence

INSTAGRAM: @bergerpartnership
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WA ASLA Design Excellence Award, 2018
Photo by: Built Work Photography

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THE SIMULATED METROPOLIS:

Feature Editor: Leah St. Lawrence

ART AND IDENTITY WITHIN THE NETWORK

In our physical city centers, we regularly encounter artistic and personal expressions as street performances, community engagements (street fairs/ marches), public art, and manifestations of subcultures. These experiences are now similarly presented in the digital world through our participation in the simulated metropolis of online social networks. This ARCADE feature highlights artists, curators, and writers who use these technological platforms — such as Instagram and Tumblr — and emerging technologies — such as VR/AR headsets and immersive content — to carve out digital space for self-expression and community. Ranging from poeticisms, manifesto manifestations, an interview to musings, the works presented in this issue can be understood as contemporary public performances, constructed and shared digitally, that mirror societal issues we regularly encounter in our tangible lives.

In November, the *New York Times Magazine* published an article titled "On Instagram, Seeing Between the (Gender) Lines" by Jenna Wortham. Wortham discusses how social media equips nonbinary and queer individuals with a powerful way to explore and share their identities. To enter digital space as a truly anonymous individual is to be able to build a unique self — a digital identity that manifests our desire for an authentic existence.

As a result, we are seeing an increasing number of identity based and conceptual artists integrating technology and social media into their work — sometimes as the main platform. In this feature, digital artist and performer Coley Mixan translates their hyperfemme, queer, and antipatriarchal artistic practice into manifesto-esque dialogue. Performance artist and writer Patty Gone brings images and text from their online (YouTube) soap opera series, *Painted Dreams*, to us in the form of a script. In the following pages, the reader will also find a poetic collaboration between Liz Mputu and Kemi Adeyemi, which draws from Mputu's work creating POC/queer-centered digital spaces through online platforms such as NewHive and Facebook. Queer identity and the experience of the black body both online and engaged within a white patriarchal society represents the cornerstone of their expressions. What do Kemi, Liz, Coley, and Patty gain by performing identity online? Accessibility to a thriving network. This utilization of digital platforms revitalizes their original intent: to connect us with specified communities and link us in a globalized world.

The simple fact that we exist within our constructed digital spaces as we exist in our cities means that we have a right to alter, use, and conceptualize them in new ways — or to harken back to a spirit of advancement, which we are always in danger of straying from. Our potential to "stray" is the focus of Seattle-based artist Aidan Fitzgerald's performance, *Work Day*, which he discusses in his essay "Online Gluttony." Fitzgerald's performance is a commentary on the massive influx of online content we experience through our phones and the resulting overstimulation. Artists such as Reilly Donovan, however, approach electronic media from a humanistic point of view, showcasing the potential of these technologies to connect rather than overwhelm.

New media curator Julia Greenway brings digital work to physical spaces, creating powerful manifestations of digital translation, which allow users to interact bodily with formations of the network. The representation of the digital as a textual narrative can be more difficult because it reduces the physical interaction to a cerebral one, resulting in certain elements of the presentation being inherently incomplete. This feature introduces digital and electronic work in a catalogue like format, but each contribution begs for further engagement in its original, digital context. I would encourage you, our readers, to seek out and experience the work of these artists and thinkers within the shared simulated city — online. ■

Leah St. Lawrence is an art critic, new media curator, NewHive advocate, and chair enthusiast. St. Lawrence writes about and curates contemporary new media, digital interaction, and online engagement—specifically related to political/social/LGBTQI issues. You can contact St. Lawrence through her website: leahstlawrence.com.

Opposite: Illustration constructed from a documentation image of Sarah Meyohas's Cloud of Petals*, 2018, Disjecta Contemporary Art Center, Portland, OR. Photo by Joe Freeman, provided courtesy of Julia Greenway. Design and illustration by Sean Wolcott of Rationale.*

VR AR

THE COLLISION BETWEEN CONTEMPORARY ART AND VR/AR TECHNOLOGIES

An Interview with Artist Reilly Donovan
By Leah St. Lawrence

Reilly Donovan describes himself as an electronics artist — a relatively new concept in contemporary art practice, though the merging of electronics and art harkens back to the artistic utilization of film and photographic technologies. Using space, installation projections, and emerging tech more commonly found in gaming or entertainment industries — such as virtual and augmented reality headsets — Donovan creates visceral interactions between his work and the viewer. In the following interview, he shares his process and the concepts behind many of his hardware/software-driven artworks.

Leah St. Lawrence: What types of hardware do you use in your work?
Reilly Donovan: I use computers, phones, monitors, cameras, sensors, virtual reality headsets, and virtual networks. Recently, I've emphasized experimenting with virtual, augmented, and mixed reality as emerging art forms. Mixed reality is the merging of simulated content with the physical world. The only mixed-reality headsets that currently exist are Microsoft HoloLens and Magic Leap, and I've been working with both. They are developer models intended for experimentation, and I've been exploring their capabilities and integrating them into my artwork.

You've also been working with glass in conjunction with digital tools, and you had a residency at Pilchuck where you made work exploring string theory in physics.
One of my main objectives at Pilchuck was to experiment with the intersection of glass and mixed reality. I did this by developing custom software for glassblowers using the Microsoft HoloLens. With the headset, glassblowers could see both the physical world and holographic renderings of objects to fabricate — they could scale, rotate, and place an object alongside themselves as they blew glass. To help them with fabrication, they could walk around an object to get a true sense of its form from every possible perspective.

String theory — which suggests that everything that exists is made out of vibrating strands of energy — has informed a lot of my visual work. I found the parameters of glass correspond to the dynamic properties of strings and chose to explore the spectrum of representation offered by string theory at my Pilchuck residency. The glass forms we made are modeled after string theory's higher dimensional geometries, many of which are algorithmically derived, such as spherical harmonics, Calabi–Yau manifolds, supershapes, and Möbius strips. The glassblowers made open and closed strings, some of which took on the form of sine waves, and they would shake the glass while it was hot to encapsulate and suspend the vibration of an otherwise entropic state within the material.

Let's talk about your project *Hypnagogic Hypnopompia*. What does the title mean?
Hypnagogia is the state of consciousness between being awake and being asleep. Hypnopompia is the opposite — the state of consciousness before waking. The project is about this strange borderland of the mind, where structure and chaos coexist. It combines a variety of emerging technologies, including volumetric video recorded using the Microsoft Kinect. Viewers use their hands to navigate the environment, which is populated by various homages to landmarks in the history of cinema. The Lumière brothers, Dalí, and Hans Richter are among some of the pioneers hinted at in the work. I made the piece early on in consumer access to virtual reality technology. I approached VR as if it were the next big thing that would change our culture in the same way cinema and photography did. VR is like Lumière's train bursting through the wall in a theater, but in this case, the train is almost really there.

RECENTLY, I'VE
EMPHASIZED
EXPERIMENTING
WITH VIRTUAL,
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MIXED REALITY AS
EMERGING ART FORMS.

And what about *Hokum Bunkum*? This is another quite conceptual piece of yours.

The project translates to *nonsense, nonsense.* It's basically absurdity squared. After the 2016 election I felt helpless. It seemed there was nothing I could do to rectify the situation—I could only bear witness. I found virtual reality to be an environment where I could express that sense of having no control. In the piece, I use the leap motion to track users' hands in the virtual environment. Gravity has been disabled, making objects weightless and difficult to grasp. Objects are also gelatinous and squishy, adding to the difficulty in holding them while also making them seem more like toys. The Russian flag, American flag, the constitution, an iPhone, a gun, a MAGA hat, a toy eagle, and a toy bear all swim around one another in an antigravity dance on the Resolute desk in the Oval Office. The project is intended to be both playful and ominous, as if you really shouldn't be playing with these very important items.

You collaborated with digital artists/musicians NoiseFold (Cory Metcalf and David Stout) on *The Observer Effect* and *Vesica Pisces*. How was that?

Cory and David are colleagues and friends, and they have had a huge influence on me. The two cultivate an aesthetic that aligns with the history, heritage, and trajectory of art and technology that I strive to participate in.

Cory and David have a toolkit they have developed for over a decade in Max MSP, a visual programming language. *The Observer Effect* and *Vesica Pisces* pushed that toolkit into new territory to support virtual reality, and I worked with them to make that happen. We worked together to develop the worlds and the fauna that populate the two projects.

You use several Microsoft products to produce your work, such as the Kinect, HoloLens, and Magic Leap.

When you've interfaced with Microsoft about your use of hardware, how has that gone?

Microsoft has been very receptive and supportive of my most recent project, *Murmur,* a mixed-reality installation in collaboration with John Grade. They provided me with equipment early on to help develop our project. They are currently generating promotional material surrounding our exhibit, which has been a great opportunity to interface with their massive team of talent, and I look forward to working with them more in the future.

Do you think artists and technology companies will be able to work together more moving forward? I don't often hear of large companies supporting everyday artists' uses of technology.

That is a relationship that needs to be cultivated and maintained. It is essential to have artists working with emerging technologies to reveal what is hidden in plain sight. Technology is useless without context for its implementation. Artists provide insight into the expressive potential of emerging technologies. I think there are only benefits to our community and culture if companies and artists collaborate. ∎

Reilly Donovan is a new-media artist based in Seattle. Learn more about his work at reillydonovan.com.

Leah St. Lawrence is the editor of this issue's feature.

Page 30: Reilly Donovan, The Observer Effect*, 2016, virtual reality installation at 9e2, Seattle, WA. Collaboration with David Stout and Cory Metcalf (Noisefold).*

Clockwise from left: Reilly Donovan, Strings*, 2018. From an artist in residence program at Pilchuck School of Glass, Stanwood, WA.*

Reilly Donovan, Hokum Bunkum*, 2017, virtual reality installation, Dendroica Gallery, Seattle, WA.*

Reilly Donovan, Mirror Symmetry*, 2018, interactive art installation, Bellwether arts festival at Bellevue Arts Museum, Bellevue, WA. Mirror Symmetry is a natural user interface using a depth camera to follow people's motion through space. The Microsoft Kinect tracks the user and represents it as interactive feedback.*

Images courtesy of the artist.

CURATING THE DIGITAL

By Julia Greenway

As a curator, I have strived to place viewers inside of the digital, giving tangible boundaries to that infinite space. The gallery is my medium; I work collaboratively with artists to realize their software-based works within physical rooms. This act of translation takes many forms: installations, large-scale video displays, projection mapping, virtual reality, learning systems, internet platforms, and countless others. Through site-specific exhibitions and cross-cultural dialogue, this curatorial process investigates themes of identity as mediated by contemporary modes of communication, including the falseness, disembodiment, and fluidity of online networks, cities, and selves.

This methodology has generated fruitful results with many artists, including Sarah Meyohas and Sondra Perry, who exhibited at Disjecta Contemporary Art Center in Portland, Oregon, during my time as curator-in-residence there.

Sarah Meyohas, *Cloud of Petals*
Sarah Meyohas's exhibited work, *Cloud of Petals*, explores themes of digital world-building. Staged in Eero Saarinen's Bell Labs in Holmdel, New Jersey, the central video shows male workers tenderly plucking 10,000 rose petals. Each of these petals was photographed, archived on a cloud server, and used as material for an algorithmic, expansive, self-learning network. The simplicity of the male performance of plucking the petals and its role in building a digital network suggests that the foundation of our technological language is birthed through the feminine, facilitated by the masculine, with the process working as a parallel to reproduction in the biological world.

The clichéd language of love and reproduction finds yet another analogue in this conversion to digital information. The game of "he loves me, he loves me not," represented by the pulling of the petals, is a metaphor for the binary language of digital communication—on and off, expressed as 1 and 0. The petal becomes a series of pulses through wires, populating servers and filling the cloud. In the exhibit, the digitized petals came to life via four virtual worlds that housed them as they swirled, danced, and fell like rain around the viewer.
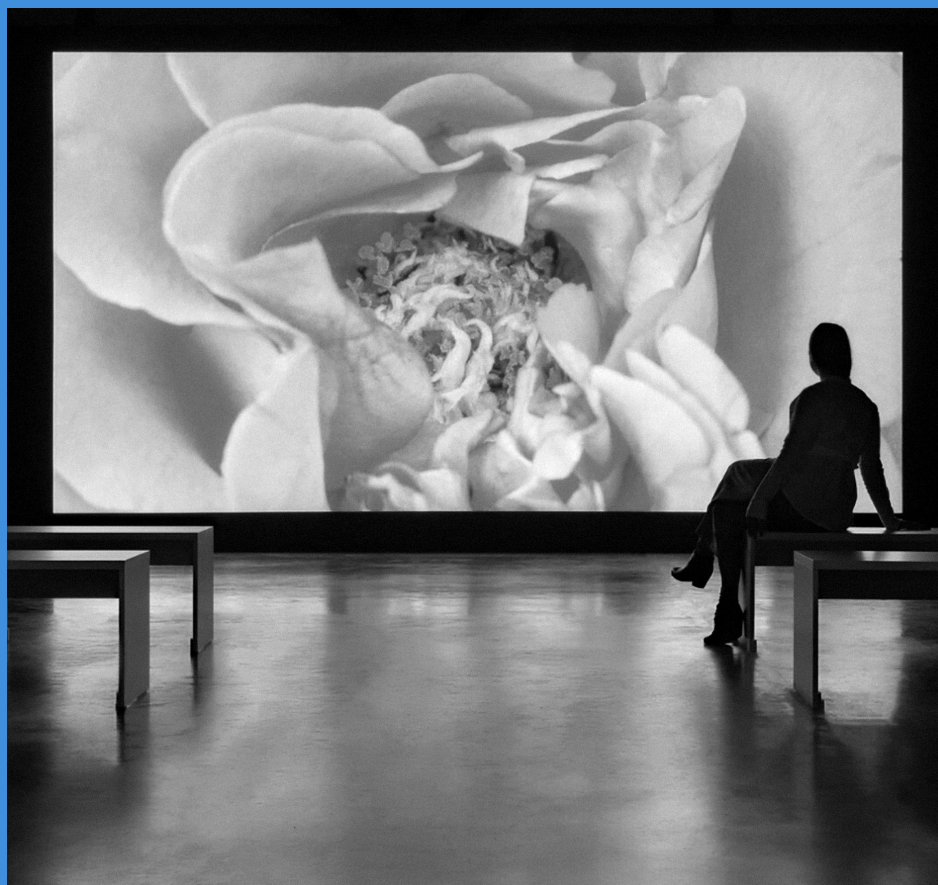
Virtual reality headsets hovered above the floor as the projected video filled the west wall, its determinative audio reverberating throughout the space.

Sondra Perry, *Chromatic Saturation*
Also exhibited at Disjecta was Sondra Perry's *Chromatic Saturation*, which placed the artist's videos *Lineage for a Multiple-Monitor Workstation: Number One* and *IT'S IN THE GAME '17 or Mirror Gag for Vitrine and Projection* in dialogue for the first time. The exhibition enveloped the gallery in a void of digital production space, with the walls painted in Perry's distinctive palette of chroma key blue and green (i.e., the colors used for video and CGI production). The usage of chroma key formulates a visual link between Perry's projected works; the colors glitch between the portrayal of lineage as documentary and 3-D rendered artifacts. The artist's coding examines the impact of digital media in its simulation and appropriation of blackness.

The exhibition weaves a semiautobiographical narrative. Perry leads the viewer through familial history and digital representations of the body, navigating the construction of personhood in the process. *Chromatic Saturation* abandoned viewers within the infinite space of digital rendering platforms. Free of established hierarchies of race, age, and gender, they were required to construct their own ideas of identity — much like the original intent of an internet-based persona.

In placing the viewer within the digital through the physical transformation of the exhibition space, Meyohas's and Perry's works highlight the inherent placelessness of technological environments. But rather than resigning themselves to simple critiques of this phenomenon, they take a proactive approach, embracing the potential for new self-making in this undefined space. ■

For over three years, Greenway was the director of Interstitial, a committed space in the Pacific Northwest for artists working in digital- and time-based mediums. Her work focused on how digital media influences the aesthetic presentation of gender, economics, and environment. Currently, Greenway is living in London and working toward an MFA in curating at Goldsmiths.

Opposite: Sarah Meyohas, Cloud of Petals, *2018, Disjecta Contemporary Art Center, Portland, OR.*

Bellow: Sondra Perry, Chromatic Saturation, *2018, Disjecta Contemporary Art Center, Portland, OR.*

Images by Joe Freeman, courtesy of Julia Greenway.
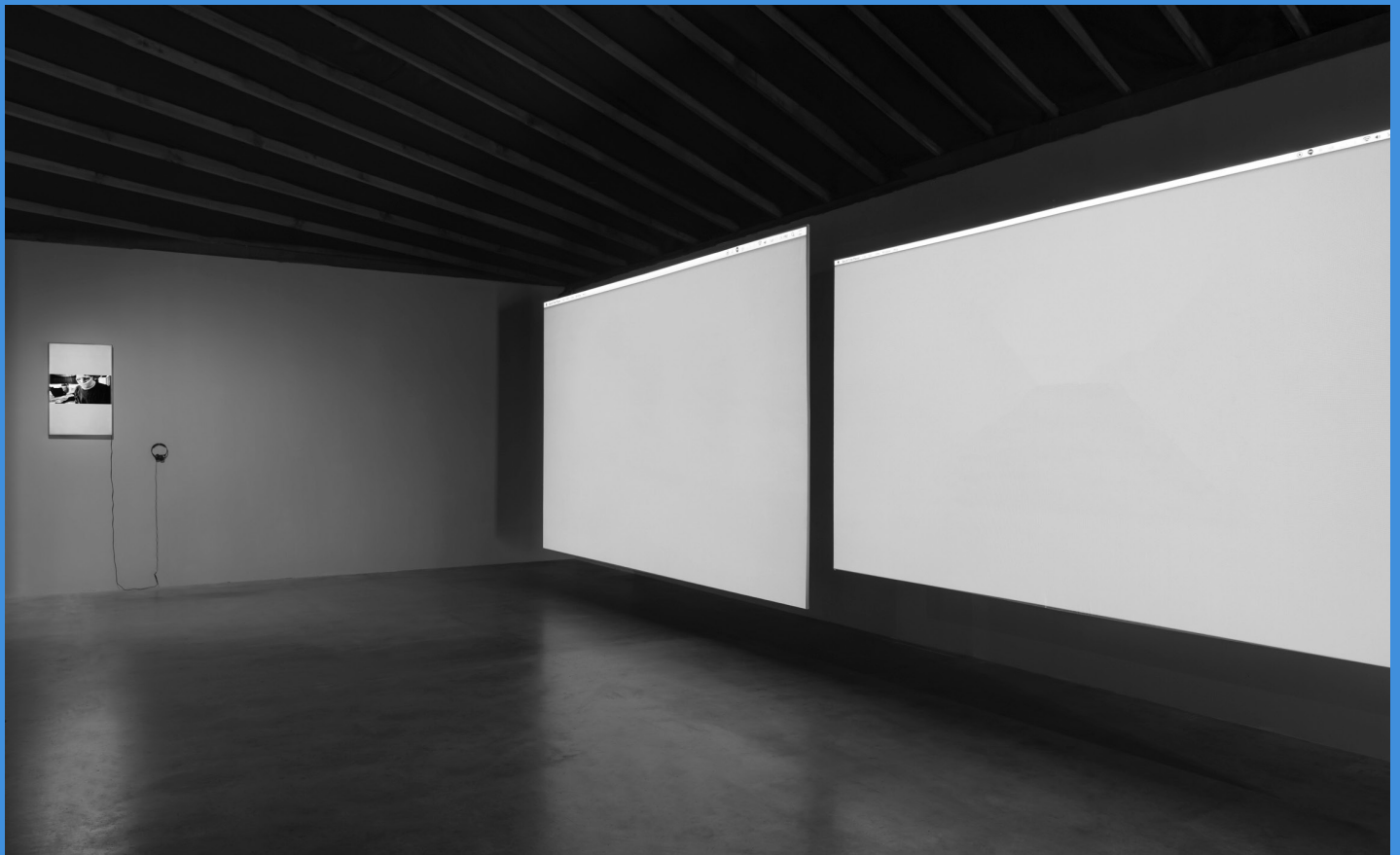
ONLINE GLUTTONY

By Aidan Fitzgerald
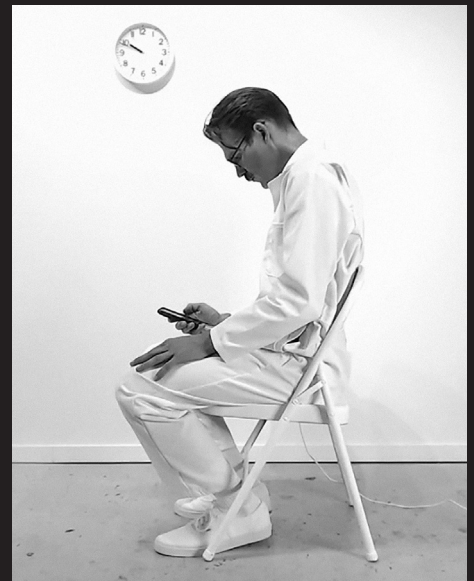
A few weeks ago, I sat in a metal folding chair and looked at content on my phone for eight hours straight for a performance piece called *Work Day*. During this marathon session of online gluttony, I lost my ability to contextualize the information being continuously presented to me. All content became equalized.

I read the breaking news that Michael Cohen was agreeing to a plea deal, watched an Ariana Grande make-up tutorial and several Lebron James highlight reels. I scrolled on as Paul Manafort was found guilty on eight counts of fraud, read event invites for art openings, birthday parties, house shows. I looked through photos of friends relaxing in Central Park, Cal Anderson Park, Venice Beach. The national prison strike began that day, and I followed the developments only seconds before I watched a woman I once knew attempt to catch a grape in her mouth. My eyes dimmed a little, and everything became blurry for minutes on end.

The platforms I was using to interact with the world rendered all context of these events and actors moot: I was numbed into seeing everything in my limited virtual space on the same level. As I kept scrolling, navigating the well-worn paths of stories, influencers, tweets, status updates, retweets, meme accounts, and secondary meme accounts, everything began to hum with that anesthetizing backlit sameness. People I grew up with, celebrities, ASMR stars, former partners, fluffy dogs, professional athletes, contemptible government officials — I saw them all evenly.

Those of us who grew up with the internet hold dual citizenship in the real and virtual worlds. We are the first generation to have unfettered access to both. Using the tools afforded to us — open source software, equitable coding programs, online forums and communities, and expanding social networks — we actively shape and circumscribe our digital spaces as both creators and consumers of seemingly unending content.

Just like the tangible "real" world, however, the digital tools and platforms afforded to us are limited according to the power dynamics between the makers of the space and its occupants. And so, our online citizenship comes with as many responsibilities as freedoms. Principle among these is our obligation as an audience: we must constantly remind ourselves that the internet encourages us to be as passive as possible. I am not sure what an active citizen of the virtual space looks like — one who comments on every photo or interacts with every group is not necessarily *active* as much as they are *engaged*. Perhaps an active citizen of the virtual world is one who deliberately turns it off and takes action IRL. Unfortunately, the majority of us sit idly in our chairs, phones in hand, scrolling, until it's time to turn out the light.

The other day, I read an essay bemoaning the habits of the lazy, phone-obsessed millennial. The omnipresence of screens — and our addiction to them — was argued to be destroying the novel as we know it, as a vehicle of storytelling. The novel fosters empathy amongst its readers, but the internet, by virtue of its endless sprawl, has numbed the empathy of its users.

This is the troubling paradox of the digital space: the facility with which we access content and information denies us the context and points of comparison needed to fully understand the hierarchy of the events around us. What I mean to say is that we have the *access* to so many more people than anybody had even 20 years ago, but we lack the deeper understanding of these other people that could be gained from, say, interpersonal interaction. We say we are more plugged in than ever before, but the internet has dimmed our ability to create a hierarchy of understanding and empathy so vital to being human.

We have unlimited access to people all over the world, from walks of life so different from our own. Movements like #blacklivesmatter and #metoo would not be possible without the far-reaching platforms we use, but the same vehicles that allow us to connect and engage with a larger diversity of people than ever before also risk barring us from empathizing with them. ■

Aidan Fitzgerald is an artist and publisher in Seattle.

Opposite: Aidan Fitzgerald, Content Aware (Work Day), *still from performance, 2018.*

Image courtesy of the artist.

SPACETIME PASTRIES: QUEER EXISTENCE IN SOCIAL MEDIA

By Coley Mixan

"MY SUSPICION IS THAT THE UNIVERSE IS NOT ONLY QUEERER THAN WE SUPPOSE, BUT QUEERER THAN WE CAN SUPPOSE."

— *Physiologist and geneticist J. B. S. Haldane,* Possible Worlds*, 1927*

My art practice encompasses performance, video, installation, and ecologic and comedic inquiry. The images here are stills from video collages that function as projections on stage — mise-en-scènes that flood my body as I perform original songs and comedy sketches. Combining footage filmed in tallgrass prairies with characters I create and pastries I want to eat, these video collages are flattened representations of living beings (and my body) which are constantly changing and overwhelming the eye with stimulus and color. These moving images are further transformed and stylized when a performance is documented and shared on social media networks.

In my video work, I utilize the concept of queer/queering spacetime: where a body is a body until it is just an image reproduced instantly in many locations at once, interacted with in the nonspace of online data sharing. Queer spacetime permeates throughout social media platforms — particularly in relation to the consumption of digital media arts in our transient, nontransparent, and smart-device-fed ecologies. When we as a community, when we who are the queer and the marginalized, when we who are not represented in the patriarchal society create and post content for an online audience, we are radicalizing a set of alternative temporalities in a way that allows any participant (ourselves included) a pocket-sized peek into a reality outside of the paradigmatic markers of white, hypercapitalist patriarchy. We cocreate queer realities by reposting and hashtagging and connecting with other beings that do not need to directly impact our physical selves; these are friends, followers, and subscribers that invite us to be creators outside of a linear timeline, deep within the abundance of content we desire to observe. Yet, can an alignment with the queering of spacetime (and a flattening of self in the infinite scroll of our binary cloud/shroud of the "Web") truly generate a creative, nonnormative edge when social media seems so closely tied to the capitalist promotion of reproduction? The answer is found in the way we choose to dance: circles of motion, spiraling with the outrageous desire to know that there is more! And that what is more in our Now is always changing.

Queer spacetime dances us into the courageous-outRAGEousness: rapid-breath edits of video layers piling on top of one another, establishing a frame that congeals over time to produce a veil of substance digested in the GUT (grand unified theory) of all that is and can be. Our artwork is an (g)astronomic athleticism: we consume and are consumed in the toroidal gasp of being. In the act of consuming this visual content, complexity arrives within the intersections of our cultural institutions, mass imaginations, personalized spiritual grocery lists, and ecological systems. This is the fulcrum where queer spacetime can help us flip systematic oppressions inside out: our collective posts of femmes and memes, unconstrained by convention, manifest power over these systematic oppressions through our own creativity and exercised control over virtual space. ■

Coley Mixan is a musician, public library activist, performance artist, radio DJ, and vegan pastry/prairie enthusiast. They currently work in Seattle, sleuthing through a multiverse of clues, hunches, and downright queer shenanigans. You can discover more on their Instagram: @astro.ooze.

Clockwise from top: Coley Mixan, :::anxiety /
anorexia, *2016, video still. YouTube performances
of emotional labor consumed by body dysphoric
disorder.*

Coley Mixan, Quantum Entanglement, *2018, video
still. Video of two separate persons climbing the
same tree four days apart within 4th dimensional
earth-time.*

Coley Mixan, FLAVORBURST, *2018, video still.
Videos of corn shucking and plastic thank you bags
floating through a Midwestern ice cream stand's
pricing chart (7 oz. of fried pickles for $3.80!!).*

Coley Mixan, The Spiral Who Loved Me, *2018, video
still, Instagram video screen grab from filming the
nonlinear film,* The Spiral Who Loved Me.

Images courtesy of the artist.

PAINTED DREAMS: SEASON 1, EPISODE 3

By Patty Gone

**Script from *Painted Dreams*
Season 1, Episode 3:**
As much as I try to show a new identity via style, the best way to measure change is a body over time. This is me dancing a month ago. Here is me dancing as a child. Artist Genesis Breyer P-Orridge says, "When you consider transsexuality, crossdressing, cosmetic surgery, piercing, and tattooing, they are all calculated impulses — a symptomatic groping towards the next phase." P-Orridge says that "... in school, peer groups, you're a boy so you have to hang out with the boys and do boy things and so on. The key point about this structure is that it's fictional."* Soaps are notorious for allowing different people to embody the same identity. Ridge Forrester of *The Bold and the Beautiful*, once played by Ronn Moss, is now Thorsten Kaye. *General Hospital*'s Carly Benson has been Sarah Joy Brown, Tamara Braun, and Laura Wright. The Wikipedia list of soap character recasts seems infinite. Duration facilitates change.

Change. Change. Change ...

Many know two actors played Simba in *The Lion King:* Jonathan Taylor Thomas as adolescent Simba, Matthew Broderick as adult. But that doesn't include Simba's singing voices: Joseph Williams and Jason Weaver. And should we include Mark Henn and Ruben Aquino, Simba's animators, who literally drew his body into existence? When the plot moved to Broadway, Simba became Scott Irby-Ranniar and Jason Raize. In the 2004 direct-to-video sequel, *Lion King 1 1/2*, Simba is Matt Weinberg.

... groping towards the next phase ...

And what about the millions of people who've been told "you are Simba" by online personality quizzes? All equally Simba, passing through one body, a single vessel. If Simba can write his own narrative and be this many people, I can be whoever the fuck I want.

*Genesis Breyer P-Orridge as quoted in *The Art of Living: An Oral History of Performance Art*. Dominic Johnson, interviewer. Macmillan International, 2015.

Just as an artist might say their medium is sculpture or painting, I'd say the medium of my YouTube series *Painted Dreams* isn't "video art" or "essay film," but soap opera. And if *The Bold and the Beautiful* is streamable for free on CBS.com, then *Painted Dreams*, as its mirror, must be equally accessible.

Painted Dreams, a comic and empathetic queering of soap opera history, imagines what would happen if, instead of traveling the world, the narrator of Chris Marker's *Sans Soleil* stayed home and watched *All My Children* with their grandmother. To me, the work has three target audiences: the art community, of course; but also the soap-watching community; and the trans, gender nonconforming, questioning community. Like many others, I first delved into gender variation via YouTube holes, which felt lonely but safe, often finding myself deep in a *FRONTLINE* trans/GNC documentary from the '90s or an obscure local radio interview with Laura Jane Grace.

Ideally, *Painted Dreams* participates in that same democratic YouTube conversation, while simultaneously undermining preconceptions about what forms the online serial can take. While many video artists post their work to Vimeo or show only in galleries, I want *Painted Dreams* to live in a space where it can be stumbled upon. ■

Patty Gone is an artist, writer, and director of the video serial Painted Dreams*. Their recent work has appeared at the Queens Museum, Bronx Academy of Art & Dance, and Spaceus. They curate the column "Off Brand Video" for the* Believer *and are the author of* The Impersonators *(Factory Hollow Press, 2017) and* Love Life *(Mount Analogue, releasing March 2019). They will be the artist in residence at Mount Analogue in Seattle in March 2019.*

YouTube channel: youtube.com/channel/ UCEM8NMS15wjGWrzr_o9lbsg Website: pattygone.com Instagram: @patty__gone
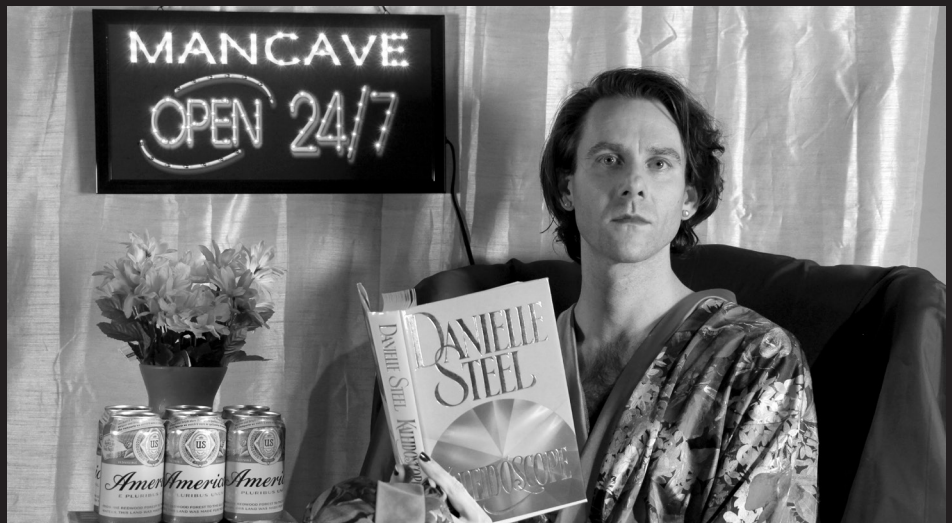
PAINTED DREAMS

Top: *Patty Gone in* Painted Dreams*, Season 2, by Patty Gone, 2018.*
Center: *Patty Gone and Stella Corso in* Painted Dreams*, Season 1, by Patty Gone, 2017.*
Bottom: *Past and present Patty, still from* Painted Dreams*, Season 1, by Patty Gone, 2017.*
Images courtesy of the artist.

KEMI OFFERS BACK (MY) SOUL |
FATIGUED, SHE LOVES ANYWAY

A Collaboration Between Kemi Adeyemi and Liz Mputu

My work is about creating platforms, specifically digital, for people to acknowledge that offering talents from a nonnormative outlook is to be made alien. By utilizing spaces such as NewHive and Tumblr, I am able to create digital healing centers and expressions centered around the themes of surveillance, the othered body, queerness, and black existence without relating directly to concepts of whiteness. Our exchange (Kemi's and mine) is about love and respect for one another, a desperate desire to make the work we find vital, and is about the fatigue we feel within the outdated parameters presented to us. Through digital and social media platforms, I am able to construct communities which riff off of energies from others who feel this way.

In 2017 I was invited by Julia Greenway to have my second solo show, at Interstitial Gallery in Seattle. She mentioned it would be attached to a residency at the University of Washington, and while I was immediately on board, the idea of offering my knowledge to graduate students while having never completed a degree at an institution for higher learning was thrilling—in both senses of the word.

But, in stepped Kemi by way of email detailing the concept of the residency program she directs, The Black Embodiments Studio. BES is a critical arts writing residency that connects contemporary artists, curators, and writers within and beyond the academy to explore investigations of blackness; it is a capsule in time, an opportunity to reach out as your most dignified self in experimentation and transparency. My corresponding exhibition hinged upon Kemi's intentions of enlivening her students with progressive work from unrepresented voices made bold, and this pushed me to create from a place where I was allowed to be my own pupil and professor. Kemi silently challenged me to turn art into lecture and coddled me with reassurances the entire way. Through Kemi's encouragement, it was made clear that this experience was not a moment of self-aggrandizement by way of a validating academic platform. It was, in reality, a heart-to-heart—an expansion on the conversations being had online by all like-minded individuals and myself, an ethereal body the dialogue could be guided by.

It was the beginning of our collaboration in a more intentional context, but by virtue of our individual pursuits for truth as we knew and sought to define it, our work has always been in harmony. While Kemi's medium as an academic allows her to manipulate language and bind us to her spells, as an artist, I supply the herbs and chicken bones to our cauldron. Double, double, toil and trouble was written with us in mind, and we've shared cryptic anecdotes to our antidotes that confirm the sincerity of our partnership. Our collaboration in these pages is a snapshot of such a witches' brew. It is inspired by selected visuals from virtual scrapbooks of online content, created by Kemi and others (such as Xaq Koal, an internet friend and digital curator), that reflect my own victories, fears, moments of intimacy, and shitposts. These images, paired with Kemi's musings and motivated by a shared appreciation for a troll's tone, together birth the Ouroboros those reading this publication are now bearing witness to.
—Liz Mputu

the_works • Following

the_works shout out to 7-11 for helping a kid stay dry 📷 @gpttran

━━━━━ stop 🐱
━━━━━ don't stop
━━━━━ That's amazing 😄
━━━━━ ART
━━━━━ 👀
━━━━━ You can take the girl out of haguemile...
━━━━━ New publicity image
━━━━━ Bag-o-ice backdrop is so key
━━━━━ Perfection
━━━━━ 🙌🙌🙌
━━━━━ Absolutely yes
━━━━━ What's cooler than bein cool? ❄❄❄🧊

212 likes

AUGUST 17

Add a comment...
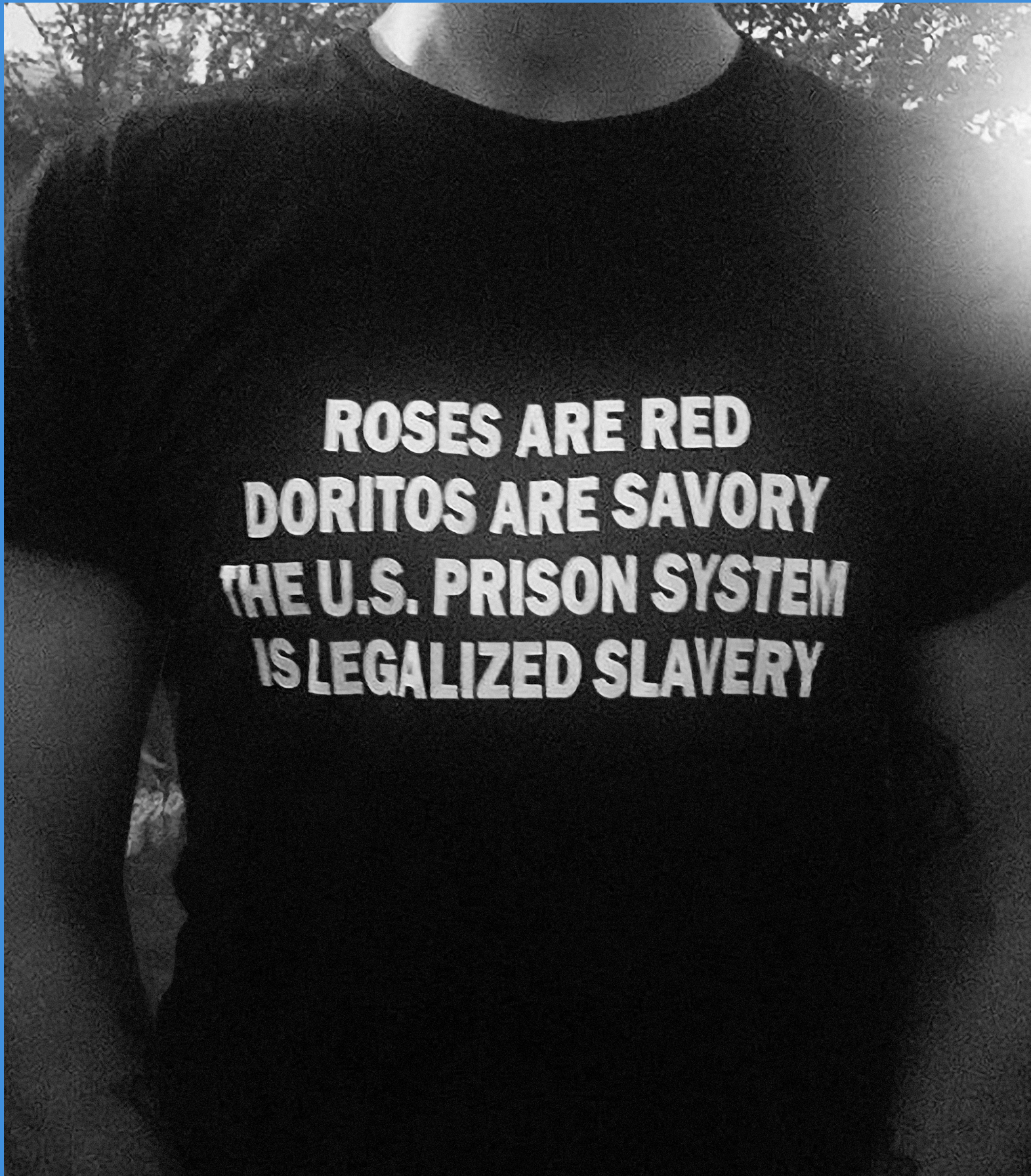
One of the only frameworks we have for understanding blackness in the US is in relation to whiteness. It is perceived as the opposite of whiteness, the inverse of whiteness, the absence of whiteness, as antagonistic to whiteness. When you are a person who is marked by blackness, a whole host of subtle and explicit expectations accompany this framework. Namely, there is a certain kind of intellectual demand that black people be the ones who labor to reveal this very relation of black to white, that we must be the ones who continually map out the ways that whiteness is the violent, structuring condition of our everyday lives. This demand is accompanied by an equally pervasive demand that we take on the labor of generating culture (music, art, writing, sports, leftist political movements, etc.) in a white supremacist landscape that has always profited off of our bodies.

In short, we are tasked with not only challenging the sovereign domain of whiteness but providing alternative visions to it: it becomes our work to produce conceptual content, including online conversations, that push white people forward in the understanding of how whiteness and white supremacy operate/function/survive/thrive. It should go without saying that many of us are tired of this work. Not only tired of the expectation that it is our work to do (it isn't) but tired of the ways that our creative output is seemingly endlessly framed as always or inherently doing this work—whether we say it is or not.

Some of us are done with it. Some of us are not working for or toward any conversation, revelation, or re-visioning of the "default" (white supremacy in digital drag). We instead craft closed networks, maybe better understood as networks of closed intelligibility, that are made for and in conversation with the systems of desire that accumulate amongst black and black queer people.

These are often diffuse online networks of images, texts, sounds, feelings, and environments where sight lines and horizon points are undeniably black. This does not mean that only black people can access them—it means that they do not extend outward to white nodes or reference points. They do not explicitly converse with whiteness except in that they provide black people access to ways of thinking, feeling, and being that are certainly required to survive whiteness. This thinking beyond does in fact take some work, though.

The networks of images, texts, sounds, feelings, and environments serve (must serve?) a kind of pedagogical function: they help us to understand how and where to desire beyond, not to overdetermine desire but to provide support structures for living amidst yet remaining critically skeptical of white supremacy's structuring of everyday life.

Sometimes this is, of course, desire for another person (but remember that desire is itself a network and does not always accumulate in single or stable end points). Other times it is desire on behalf of another person (e.g. that Kanye will return to his black-ass self). It is a desire for the self and the self's own well-being, which must be fortified from the very impulse to always pose oneself in relation to whiteness (learning to do simple things like feeling where our bodies are thus becomes necessary). This desire for a blacklife as the only life is basically like learning how to feel some type of way (blk ppl will understand). It is learning how to see, hear, and feel way black. The way to black. Even if it lasts only as long as the time it takes to scroll through a feed before you have to look up again and there you are, everywhere and nowhere. ■

Page 43: **kemi love:** or kemi as hotspot or in this case dry spot out of the rain. *08/17/18, screenshot from Adeyemi's Instagram. For remembrance of all things black (as in innovative), and cool (as in quick to make it look easy), calm, collected. The squat that killed my kidnapper with flyness (see comments).*

Opposite: **kemi black at it again.** *2018, screenshot from Adeyemi's Instagram. An image and its words; dignified aesthetics.*

Above: **breathebitch.com.** *2018, GIF still. Screenshot from Mputu's Instagram post requesting followers and friends to "refresh, like a page."*

Left: **the matrix called it wants its duality black:** or in a world where Will Smith accepted the role of Neo. *2018, Instagram. Kanye West doing Kanye things while we cite this photo-op for social commentary.*

Images courtesy of the artists.

Kemi Adeyemi is assistant professor of gender, women and sexuality studies and director of The Black Embodiments Studio at the University of Washington. Her book manuscript on black queer women's geographies of neoliberalism is currently in development, and she is in the process of coediting a volume provisionally titled Queer Nightlife. Adeyemi's writing has or will appear in GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies; Women & Performance; Transgender Studies Quarterly; Gulf Coast: A Journal of Literature and Fine Arts; and QED: A Journal in GLBTQ Worldmaking. She has contributed exhibition catalog essays for This Is Not a Gun (Los Angeles), black is a color (Los Angeles), Impractical Weaving Suggestions (Madison), and Endless Flight (Chicago), and writings on artists including taisha paggett, Adee Robinson, Amina Ross, Brendan Fernandes, Oli Rodriguez, and Indira Allegra. Adeyemi co-curated unstable objects with Sampada Aranke at The Alice gallery in 2017 and will curate Feels Right at Ditch Projects in October 2019.

Liz Mputu is a creator of virtual portals and channels femme/queer/POC identity and perspective into their every digital breath. Working through Tumblr, NewHive, and Facebook, they, without hesitation, generate platforms on which individuals can present themselves as love. Tackling such issues as surveillance, blackness in white America, body image, and queer culture, Liz is a defining force in the rise of digital expression. Liz has been featured in Paper Magazine, Rhizome, and the Stranger, and was invited by Kemi Adeyemi to be a keynote speaker at the University of Washington in 2017. Liz currently resides in Orlando, Florida.

Left: **Work by xaq koal:** or my friends are p good at this technology ting. 2018, Instagram. A digi-collage by Xaq Koal illustrating the multiplicities of one's mindset.

Right: **RealPlayer but like the multimedia app.** 2015, Powerpoint presentation image from body mapping performance piece by Mputu. Body mapping as a means of self reflection; body regions plotted out with emotions skin deep.

Images courtesy of the artists.

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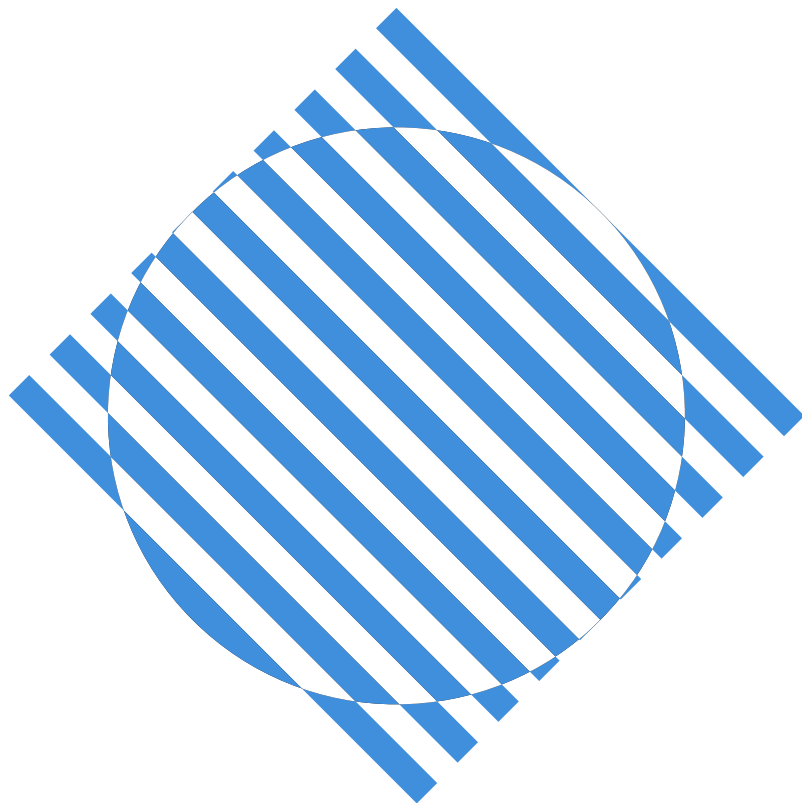# RAGEN
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Urban Design Observer

URBANITES' NOTEBOOK: THOUGHTS FROM CITY DWELLERS ON URBAN SPACES

By **Amy Lindemuth**

I'm a landscape architect, and for several years I've had insightful conversations on urban issues with friends and acquaintances who are outside and inside the design, planning, and real estate professions. Sometimes their perspectives are incongruous with the worldviews I believed they held. Other times they eloquently describe their daily hassles and heartbreaks, proposing solutions I hadn't considered.

The following brief interviews (four questions) attempt to gather a range of perspectives from urbanites about the current and future direction of their cities and offer a glimpse into our respective urban think tanks. This is the first installment of what is planned as an ongoing conversation with city dwellers about their changing urban landscapes.

Miki Sodos

Miki Sodos is the co-owner and operator of Café Pettirosso, Bang Bang Café, and the upcoming Bang Bang Kitchen in Seattle's Belltown, Capitol Hill, and Hillman City neighborhoods, respectively.

What is the biggest challenge facing your city?

The speed of growth. The governmental infrastructure is not comprehensive enough to handle it, in my opinion. There are not enough city employees to make sure that big developers are following codes and permitting rules. There is not enough affordable housing for lower-wage workers, which in turn pushes away the arts and music scene, which has always been the heart and soul of Seattle. The city is working very hard to keep up, but the growth is so fast, and the city is not equipped to maintain its integrity.

How do you personally define "livability" within a city? Is your city more or less livable than 10 to 20 years ago, and why do you think that is?

To me "livability" means that people can choose to live in the same neighborhood where they work or relatively close to it. This is what keeps a neighborhood alive. Businesses and their employees are what make a neighborhood vibrant. Yes, some neighborhoods might be out of reach for the average worker, but in an area like Capitol Hill, living near your workplace has always been the norm. But that's not the case anymore.

What is the best part of living in your city right now? What is missing from city life for you?

The neighborhood aspect is the best part of living in my city. I love walking down the street and seeing my customers and coworkers and exchanging smiles and hellos. It's also what's missing for me right now. I have been on Capitol Hill for almost 20 years. The high rents are driving out neighborhood workers, and the neighborhood feeling is still there, but it is diminished.

How do you think current or emerging technology will change your city?

I see good and bad happening. It's amazing to see the speed and efficiency that new technology brings to doing business. I'm able to accomplish more in my days than I used to 10 years ago. Hand in hand with that, though, comes the lack of human interaction. I see less conversation and more work and social networking done in my businesses than ever before. It's unfortunate that people don't ever unplug. Hopefully that will change as this progresses.

Opposite: Seattle's South Lake Union skyline earlier this year. Photo by Amy Lindemuth

Above: The historic auto row building portion of Chophouse Row in Seattle's Capitol Hill, prior to development. The building was previously a practice space for local musicians. Photo by Spike Mafford

John Rahaim

John Rahaim is the planning director for the City and County of San Francisco. Previously, he has served as the planning director for the Department of Planning and Development in Seattle.

What is the biggest challenge facing your city?

San Francisco has become the poster child for 21st-century urban regeneration and the resultant impacts now being experienced by many coastal cities. While providing unprecedented revenues and neighborhood revitalization (and a broad new range of urban activities), we have been caught off guard by the pace of growth. The result has been major disruption in many neighborhoods, particularly those of color. As a result, housing costs, displacement, income inequality, and homelessness have become our primary urban issues.

LIVABILITY IS ACCESS TO BASICS SUCH AS NUTRITIONAL FOODS, CLEAN WATER, HEALTHY ENVIRONMENTS, MOBILITY,

AND THE CHOICE OF ADEQUATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING AS AN INTRINSIC HUMAN RIGHT.

How do you personally define "livability" within a city? Is your city more or less livable than 10 to 20 years ago, and why do you think that is?

Livability for me is primarily defined by ease of access – physical, financial, social. By this definition, San Francisco has become both more and less livable. Physical access has in many ways improved with growing density and access to services, many of which can be achieved on foot in most neighborhoods. Conversely, transportation congestion, economic disparities, and housing costs have reduced access for many, resulting in fewer housing choices and longer commutes.

What is the best part of living in your city right now? What is missing from city life for you?

San Francisco is dynamic and vital. It is increasingly characterized by active and safe neighborhoods and access to a range of services and great food. While not always politically correct to admit, I find the growing global presence of the city and the city's constant innovation to be energizing. Perhaps most of all, the political values of the city are a source of pride and comfort in an otherwise upsetting political era.

The question we face: is the city losing its soul in this time of rapid change?

How do you think current or emerging technology will change your city?

The current national economic boom is largely urban. This is more than locational. The conditions creating this boom come from urban innovations that have quickly spread to all sectors. It is fueled by a growing acceptance of technology in our lives that begins in big cities. I do not believe that the access provided by technology has caused or will cause social isolation; in fact, the opposite has occurred – we live together because we choose to, not because we have to. Nonetheless, technology will have major impacts on mobility, access to services, and perhaps the design of the public realm. But it will not change the fundamental physical qualities of our cities.

Amir Sheikh

Amir Sheikh is a curatorial associate at the Burke Museum at the University of Washington, where he is a team leader for The Waterlines Project. He is also affiliate faculty at the University of Washington Bothell, where he is a program manager for the People's Geography of Seattle Project.

What is the biggest challenge facing your city?

This is already being discussed ubiquitously: income inequality and related issues such as housing affordability.

How do you personally define "livability" within a city? Is your city more or less livable than 10 to 20 years ago, and why do you think that is?

Livability is access to basics such as nutritional foods, clean water, healthy environments, mobility, and the choice of adequate affordable housing as an intrinsic human right. The unprecedented amount of capital that has been flowing into Seattle has so skewed the market that livability is difficult for many. But there have always been communities that have been denied these amenities.

What is the best part of living in your city right now? What is missing from city life for you?

I walk a lot. Walking is one of the primary ways I learn from, experience, and enjoy the city. Through these walks, I feel there seems to be a heightened air of cosmopolitism that people are experiencing. A large swath of this, however, is a very class-based cosmopolitism. It is also a cosmopolitism that falls into a type of lifestyle marketing that sets up the urban landscape as a site of consumption (e.g. "live, work, play"... and eat) that is targeted to very specific demographics. I feel there is a lack of a more organic cosmopolitism that is inclusive of lower-income people, communities of color, and communities that have been in existence here.

How do you think current or emerging technology will change your city?

There is a lot of discussion these days about smart cities, the role of big data, and related technologies to help

manage our urban landscape. I've always been enthusiastic about the power of place-based storytelling (perhaps "slow data"?), not only for more broadly informing and shaping our relationships to each other, history, and this place, but also for community empowerment, mobilization, and influencing cross-sector urban planning and environmental decision making. There are several examples of projects around town that are utilizing technologies: analog, digital, or hybrid approaches for storytelling, particularly around the narratives of resilient communities experiencing the processes of urban transformation, gentrification, climate change, and displacement we are seeing today. Not that these processes are new — there are long-standing relationships and legacies between history, place, and power here in Seattle, some of which can be traced back to settler-colonialism and the occupation of Indigenous lands. These relationships are being actively experienced, shaped, contested, and reshaped in the present. I do think that effective storytelling, utilizing multiple ways of knowing and various ways of presenting narratives of place, is one element that can lead to increased intersectional awareness, dialogue, and ultimately greater equitable democratic governance. ∎

Amy Lindemuth is a landscape architect and writer living in Seattle. Her frequent wanderings around urban landscapes and conversations with urbanites never cease to entertain and surprise her.
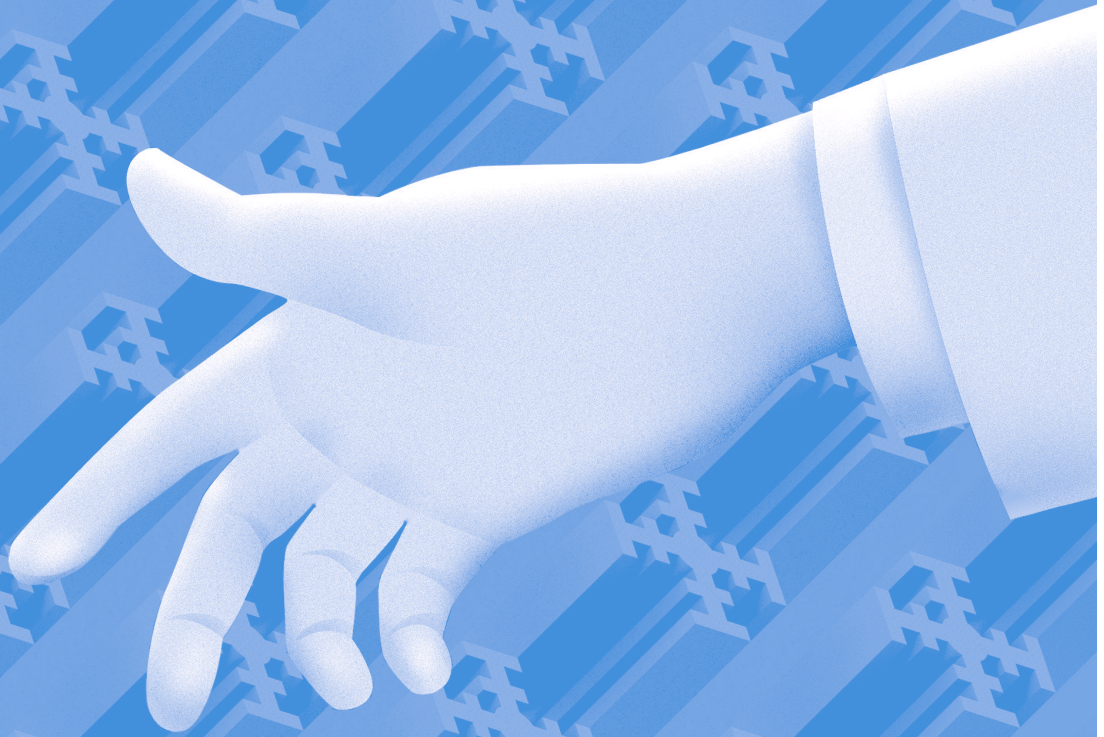
Right: The Duwamish Valley in the mid-1800s and today. Circles in the top image represent locations of Indigenous Coast Salish place names. Detail of The Waterlines Project Map, Burke Museum.

Mid-1800s

Today
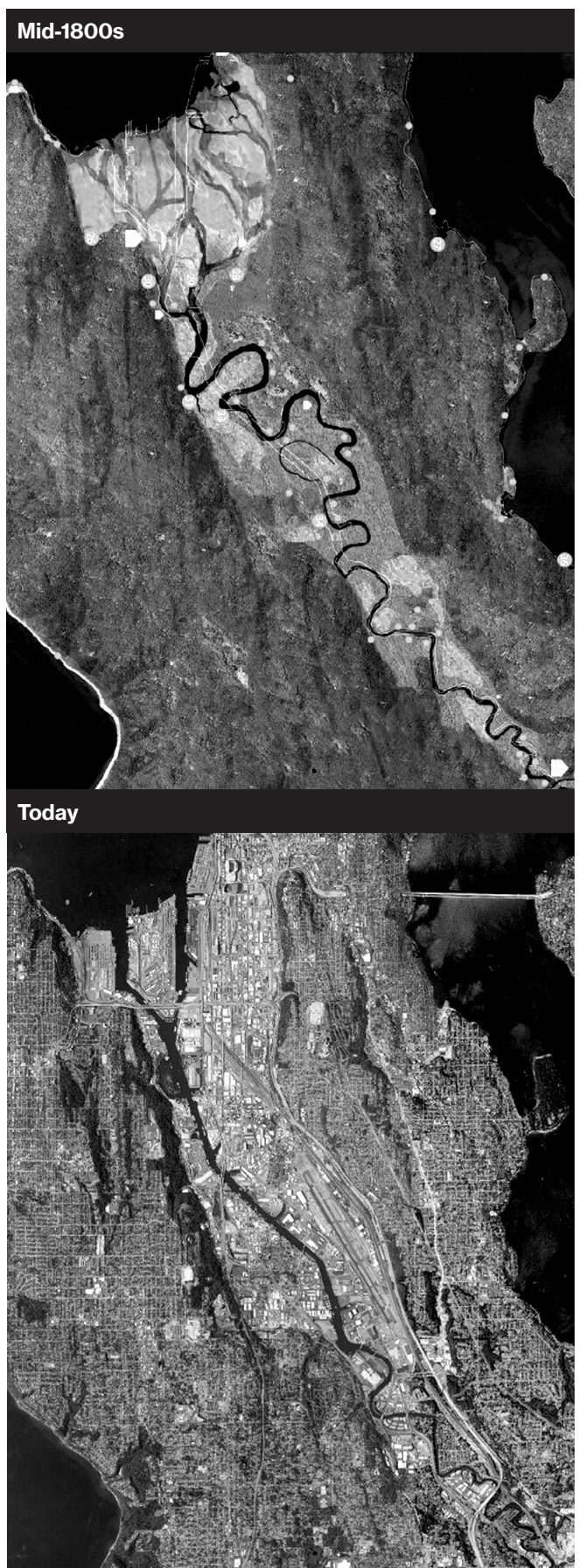
A MACHINE FOR LIVING IN: LE CORBUSIER, UTOPIAN DREAMS, AND THE UNCERTAIN FUTURE OF SMART CITIES

By John Rousseau

> ## "LE CORBUSIER WAS PLANNING NOT ONLY A PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT. HE WAS PLANNING FOR A SOCIAL UTOPIA TOO."
> —*Jane Jacobs,* The Death and Life of Great American Cities, *1961*

In 1933, Le Corbusier published *Ville Radieuse (The Radiant City)*, a polemic on modernist design and urban planning. His vision was radical: a utopian city emerging from war-torn Europe, enabled by industrialization and inspired by the belief that modern design and technology could restore harmony between man and his environment, effect progressive social change, and create a more efficient and egalitarian world.

Le Corbusier's city was an expression of mechanical thinking rendered in brutally simple concrete forms. On a vast grid of idealized proportions, he envisioned monolithic towers rising above wide highways, which in turn floated above open parks and infrastructure below. Every element, and every function, had a place and a purpose intended to optimize daily life. It was a city created for the automobile and the accelerating pace of modern society. In both plan and ideology, it was a city designed for and *as a technology*. It was a machine for living on a grand scale — an epic and romantic expression of the future and a dramatic break from the medieval cities it was intended to replace.

Jane Jacobs, in *The Death and Life of Great American Cities* (1961), criticized Le Corbusier's design for separating functions, moving people away from the street, and placing the automobile at the center of it all: "He attempted to make planning for the automobile an integral part of his scheme, and this was, in the 1920s and early 1930s, a new, exciting idea. He included great arterial roads for express one-way traffic. He cut the number of streets because 'cross-roads are an enemy to traffic.' He proposed underground streets for heavy vehicles and deliveries, and of course like the Garden City planners he kept the pedestrians off the streets and in the parks. His city was like a wonderful mechanical toy."

It would take decades for Le Corbusier's influence to be realized — often as well-intentioned responses to needs for affordable housing and urban reform following World War II. As the automobile remade both cities and suburbs (paving the way for sprawl, white flight, and traffic as we know it), new high-rise housing projects were built in cities like St. Louis (Pruitt-Igoe) and Amsterdam (Bijlmermeer). In these places and many others, the towers, parks, and highways of modernist idealism collided with the messy reality of human behavior, the inherent complexity of cities, systemic racism and poverty, and the intractable dynamics of economics and policy.

What resulted were iconic and spectacular failures, immortalized by the televised demolition of Pruitt-Igoe in 1972, only a few decades after it was built. While the demise of these projects (and for some, the dream of modernism itself) is more nuanced than an image of the buildings imploding, it persists as a cautionary tale about the limits of top-down design thinking and the hubris of master planning. These moments are also a reminder that the future is inherently uncertain and that aligning today's good intentions with overly idealistic assumptions about future technologies and their trajectories is naive at best.

A New Machine

Even so, technology is a powerful mythology. In downtown Toronto, a 12-acre plot of industrial land known as Quayside is slated for development as a living laboratory for emerging tech and a model for future cities. Toronto selected Sidewalk Labs (Alphabet/Google) as a partner for this project based on an ambitious proposal: they would use the land to design and build a new city from scratch, supported by an underlying smart city platform that would enable a multitude of digital products and services. For Google, this investment could become the "Android/iOS" of smart cities — the dominant (and proprietary) technology on which the majority of smart services are built.

The plan is a bold and remarkable synthesis of good intentions. It is a contemporary utopia designed to shape quality of life and create a better future through the use of data and intelligent systems. It includes underground infrastructure, autonomous transit, a vast array of sensors to soak up undefined quantities of data, smart trash cans, layers of new services, and much more yet to be envisioned. The buildings themselves are designed to adapt to multiple uses over time, including housing, office space, and retail, as if the city itself were software. It is an incredible machine.

Writing in *MIT Technology Review*, Elizabeth Woyke suggests: "Unsurprisingly for a company spawned, in part, by technologists, Sidewalk thinks of smart cities as being rather like smartphones. It sees itself as a platform provider responsible for offering basic tools (from software that
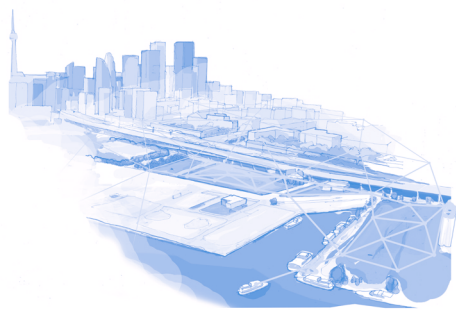
identifies available parking spots to location-based services monitoring the exact position of delivery robots), much as Google does with its smartphone operating system, Android. Details are still under discussion, but Sidewalk plans to let third parties access the data and technologies, just as developers can use Google's and Apple's software tools to craft apps."

Missing from the proposal is clarity about how it's all going to work economically, socially, and technologically. There are obvious concerns about privacy—who will own the vast amount of public data and to what ends will it be used? Yet the most critical question remains unasked: is thinking of the city as a technology a good mental model to begin with?

Systems Within Systems

There are two significant problems with the phone analogy as a useful and desirable way to think about the future of cities. First, it is a myopic way to understand complex systems. Second, it makes an explicit assumption that may not be true—that a private-sector technology platform is inherently aligned with the public good.

Cities are uniquely hard design problems. They are mega systems, comprising many intertwined and complex minor systems. It's one reason that a wicked problem like homelessness not only encompasses housing but also involves economics, emergent and conflicting human behaviors, societal attitudes, systemic racism, mental health, politics and policy, and the surrounding social service ecosystem— just to name a few factors.

What's more, a city and its systems exist on a uniquely long continuum spanning multiple generations and technologies, in a condition of perpetual emergence and change. Consequently, any intervention needs to consider the past, present, and future simultaneously. This is the appeal of starting from a *tabula rasa*, like Google's Quayside or Le Corbusier's Ville Radieuse proposes. It allows designers and technologists to sidestep everything that makes the city complicated by creating a set of controlled conditions that align to a specific mental model and moment in time.

Dangerous Assumptions

If we have learned anything from Facebook, it is that platforms and algorithms are not neutral, networks are not necessarily good, and the best intentions can produce negative outcomes that, at scale, become really big problems. Likewise, advocating a market-driven platform model for cities assumes that self-interest is the best incentive for innovation and in turn is the best way to accomplish social change.

As also reported in Woyke's *MIT Technology Review* article on the project, Sidewalk Labs estimates that 80 percent of the products and services at Quayside will be provided by third parties. Like today's digital marketplace, many of these will be designed to monetize data and shape human behavior. In a capitalist system that favors disruption and incentivizes rapid growth, the sorts of services supplied by a smart city will be those that best align with the interests of the people in power and not necessarily with the broader needs of society—and particularly not with the concerns of the most vulnerable or marginalized populations.

So, questions about who has access to data, what kind of data it is, how long it persists, and how it can be used are critical to understanding the implications of the Quayside proposal, both now and as a future precedent. More fundamentally, what is the desired relationship between the public sector and private enterprise? Is civic data a commodity? Are citizens the product? Should the city itself be a vast monetization scheme? And what is the burden for transparency between those who collect/monetize data and the people that produce it?

This is uncharted territory, with significant and lasting impacts not only for cities but citizens and society. It would be worthwhile to ask difficult questions now, before the foundation is set and a technology platform is irreversibly embedded in all aspects of daily life, powering a machine no one wants to live in that cannot be demolished as easily as reinforced concrete. If we are to learn from the failures of modernism, we should first ask if we are overlooking similar issues by embracing the idea that all technological progress is inevitable or desirable.

There is also an opportunity to engage the sorts of wicked problems that most need our attention. We should acknowledge that the future is uncertain and not as simple as a smartphone. We should embrace complexity rather than seek to minimize it. We should be cautious of technological Trojan horses. Instead of bold utopian visions and abstractions, we might instead focus on targeted interventions in our urban environments that respect the interaction and evolution of people, place, and culture over time. That would truly be a smart city. ◼

John Rousseau is vice president of design strategy at Artefact, a design consultancy in Seattle that seeks to create a better future through design.

Page 54: Illustration by Dustin Horn

Opposite and this page, bottom: Sidewalk Labs and Waterfront Toronto envision a technological utopia, built from the ground up as an exemplar of smart city planning and an unprecedented, wide-ranging platform for future products and services. Images courtesy of Sidewalk Toronto.
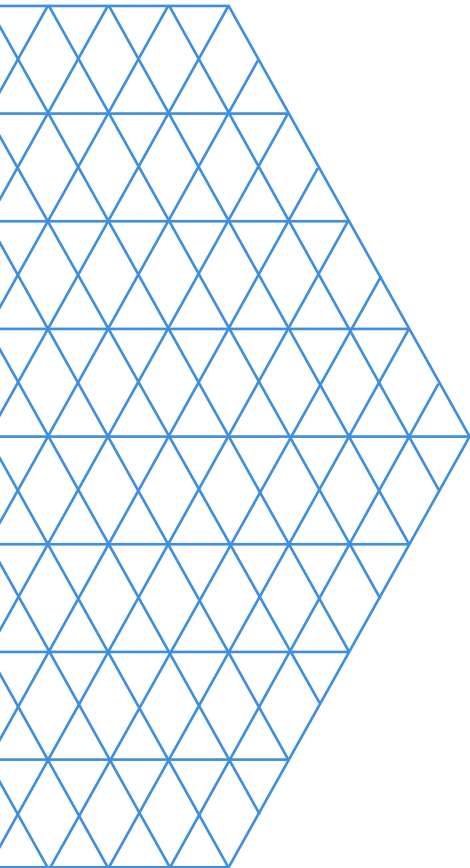
Above: The project site, southeast of downtown Toronto. The Quayside neighborhood is a small section of the larger, 800-acre waterfront parcel eventually slated for development. Photo courtesy of Sidewalk Toronto.
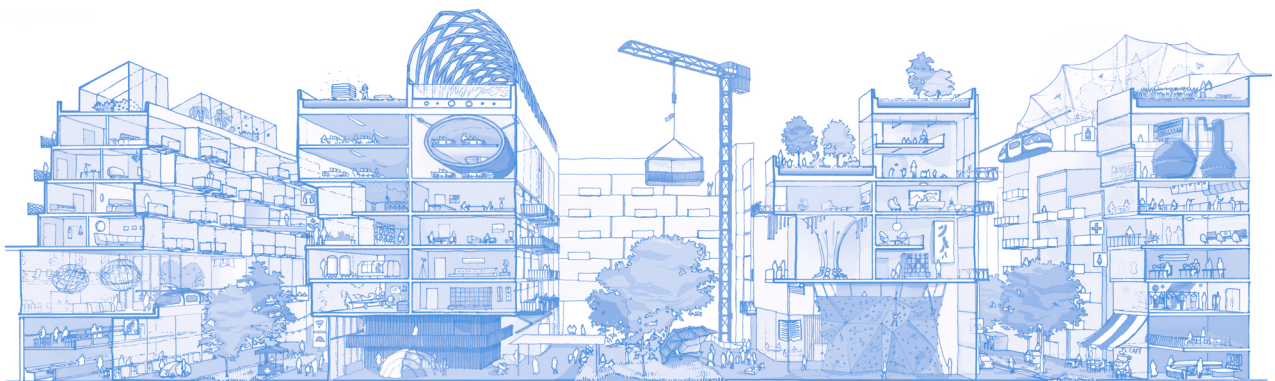
RECOGNIZING OUR ENVIRONMENTAL ARROGANCE: WHAT AN ARTIFICIAL EARTH TAUGHT ME ABOUT FAILURE

By Nicole DeNamur

In 2000, I participated in an undergraduate course on ecology at Columbia University's Biosphere 2 campus near Oracle, Arizona. My classmates and I studied the plants and animals in the desert and shared our data with students at sites in Black Rock, New York, and the rainforests of Brazil. We also had access to the Biosphere 2 structure, a.k.a. the "bubble in the desert."

Construction of Biosphere 2 — named after Biosphere 1, or planet Earth — began in the late 1980s. Biosphere 2 was a complex and often polarizing project that attracted significant attention. The glass, steel, and concrete facility was an attempt to recreate several of Earth's biomes on a small scale — just over three acres. Rainforest, ocean, mangrove wetland, savanna grassland, and fog desert ecological communities were all represented, in addition to human habitation and agricultural areas. This unique structure was designed to be a "closed system," where virtually nothing, not even gases, could come in or go out. The structure was used to support a series of missions, where submarine-style airlocks were closed and the system was sealed for a set period of time. Among other things, these closed-system missions were meant to lend insight into the viability of colonizing other planets.

However, after two missions in the 1990s faced numerous challenges, many labeled the project as a failure. Many of the species introduced into the system ultimately perished, and *Time* magazine even included Biosphere 2 on its list of the 100 worst ideas of the 20th century.

The project was largely abandoned and ultimately used as a teaching and research facility, which is how I ended up there. I remember walking through the airlocks and standing under the geometric framework of steel and glass. I could feel the "breeze" blowing through the artificial lungs as the air inside expanded and contracted with the shifts in temperature from night to day. The structure was a beautiful feat of engineering and an incredibly intimidating presence. While there were still plants and other organisms inside, the space felt empty and sterile — a sharp contrast to the life and optimism that once filled it.

The heart of the project — creating a representative sample of Earth for a short period of time — seemed relatively straightforward. It seemed to me that we should know enough about our world to recreate it on a small scale. But the reality was that, at least on some level, we did not know enough to make the project function (fittingly, managing carbon dioxide levels proved to be a significant part of the problem).

I realized that while others had labeled the Biosphere 2 project a failure, to me it was also a success. We learned something really important — we do not fully understand or appreciate the intricacies of our world and how it works.

DO WE PRESS ON WITH SPACE TRAVEL AND COLONIZATION OR DO WE DEMONSTRATE THAT WE VALUE WHERE WE LIVE NOW?

If ever there was a time to recognize and honor what we don't know, it is now. Conversations surrounding mass space travel continue to gain traction, and politicians are dismantling regulations designed to protect environmental and human health with little consideration. We lack a comprehensive understanding of the impacts of our choices, from resource extraction to allowing chemicals into our environmental systems, yet we continue to act without attempting to identify and explore our significant knowledge gaps.

If we continue to refuse to look at what we don't know, our environmental arrogance will catch up to us. We need to reframe our thinking, so that projects and processes that daylight our ignorance are not seen as failures but insightful lessons. We should question whether we abandon failed projects or choose to learn from them. Do we press on with space travel and colonization or do we demonstrate that we value where we live now, by focusing our work on regenerating the ecological
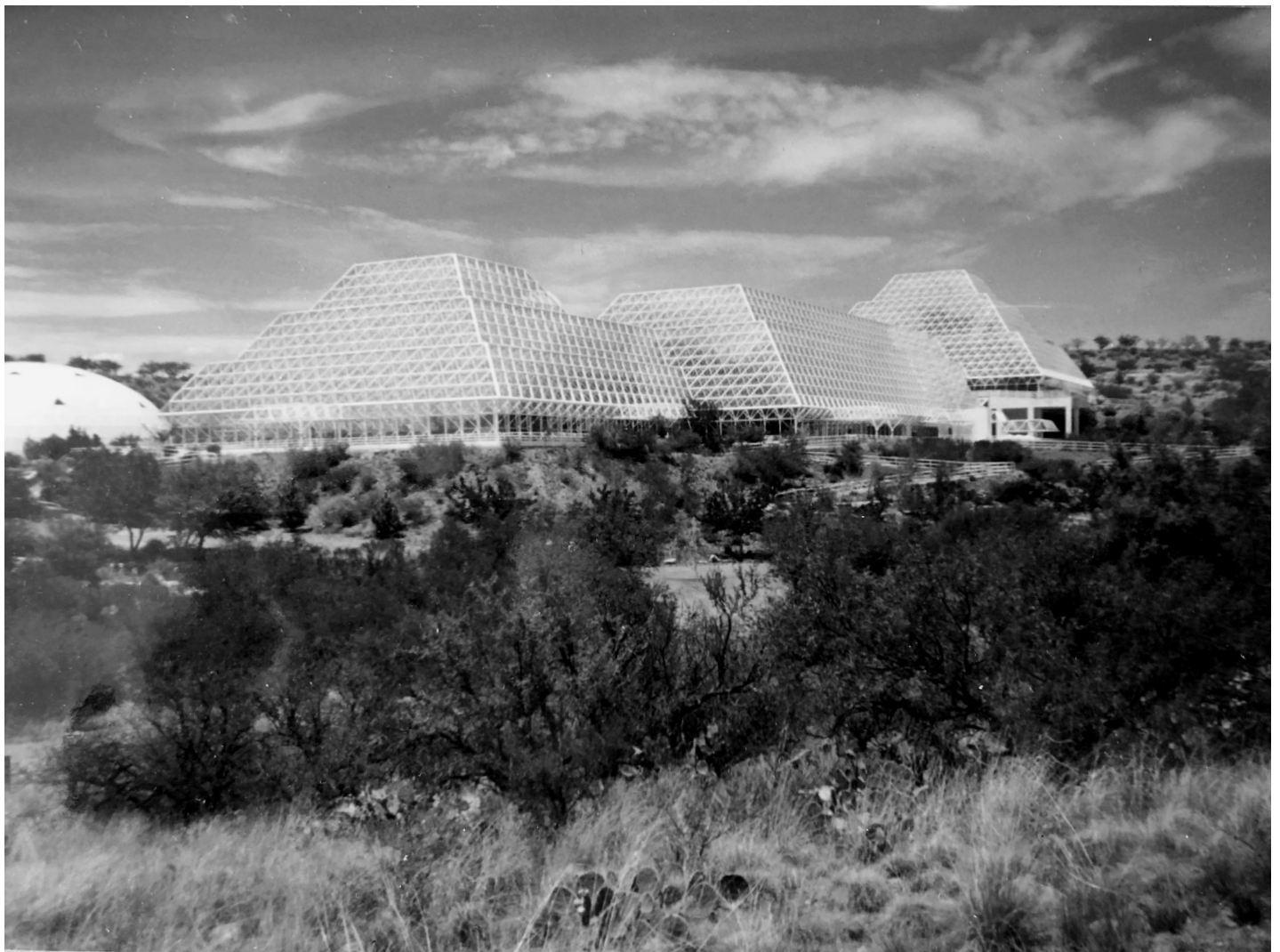
systems we've destroyed right here on Biosphere 1?

Years later, the "failed" missions of Biosphere 2 still resonate with me, and I try to pass on what I learned. I teach a course at the University of Washington that focuses on mitigating risk and driving innovation in the context of sustainable building design, construction, and operations. In their future work, I know my students will face challenges without precedent. They will have to take risks and try new things. I watch them struggle with tough questions that lack clear answers, and I know they feel like they're failing—but they are also gaining a deeper understanding of what they don't know. They are learning that "failure" also brings knowledge. And for this, I am grateful. ■

Nicole DeNamur is a lawyer, educator, and sustainability professional. Her work focuses on creating collaborative spaces and uniting diverse groups to mitigate climate change through the built environment.

Above: The silhouette of Biosphere 2, including one of the "lungs" on the left. Photo by Nicole DeNamur.

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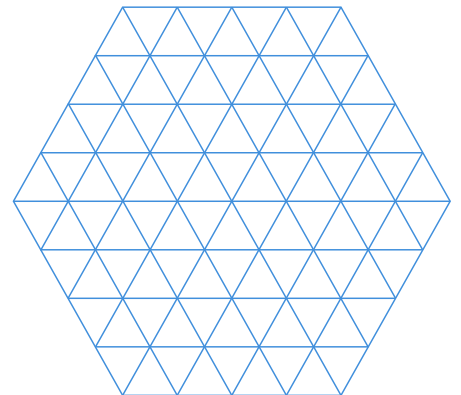
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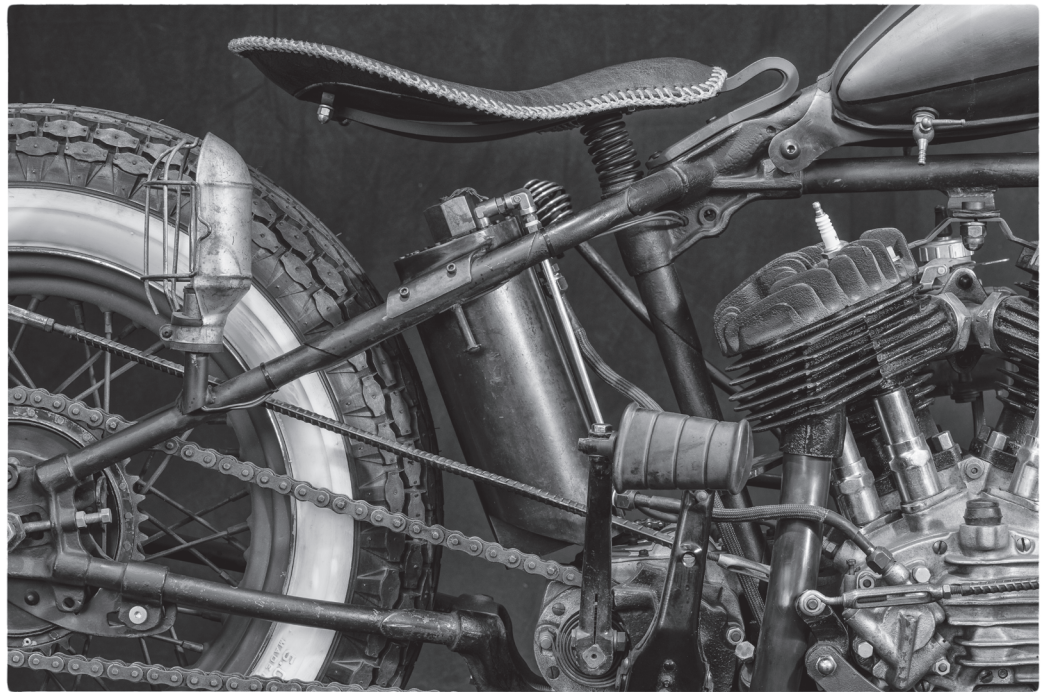
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ON *GORDON WALKER: A POETIC ARCHITECTURE:* COMING SUMMER 2019, ARCADE PUBLICATIONS

A Conversation Edited by Andrew van Leeuwen
All Photos by Andrew van Leeuwen Except Where Noted
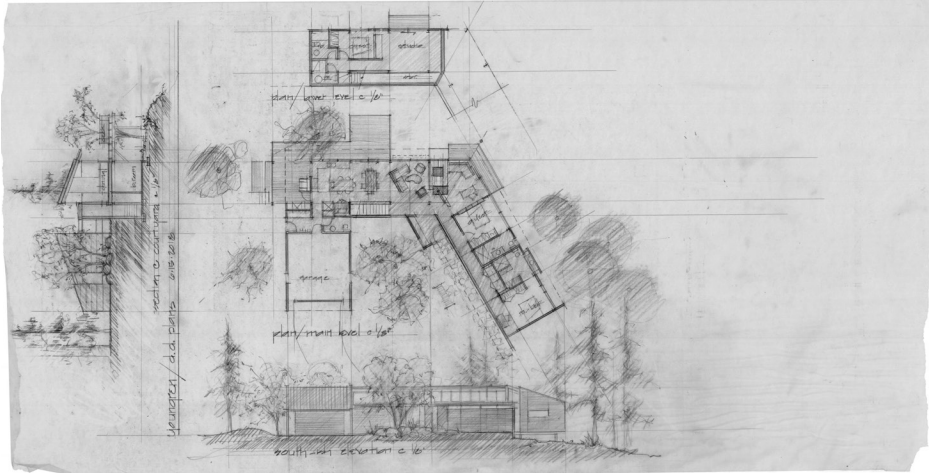
Over dinner one December evening in 2018, architectural scholar Grant Hildebrand held court with the team for his forthcoming book on Northwest architect Gordon Walker. They discussed the nature of writing and designing architectural biographies and how this current book tells a different story from most. —Editor

Left: Orcas Island, WA, residence, drawing by Gordon Walker, 2018.
Opposite: Gordon Walker. Photo by Zhenru Zhang

An Idea for a Book on Gordon Walker
Grant Hildebrand: There are various kinds of architectural books, many of which tend to be eulogies, but I wanted to do something with a different dimension for this project. It took Gordon and me a long while to sort out what kind of book it should be and what it would say; you have to answer those questions before you get started. Once we did, we decided we wanted this to be a book about a wonderful architect and person. We wanted the reader to understand the life Gordon has lived and the work he has accomplished.

After we determined these things, we brought on board Bill Hook, whose drawings have been instrumental in my previous books. ARCADE editor Kelly Rodriguez joined the team, too, and assumed responsibility for a multitude of tasks required to create, organize, and publish a book, including identifying Jeffrey Murdock to help with the writing and Andrew van Leeuwen to shoot new photography. Lucia|Marquand was engaged to design the book, which is being published by ARCADE.

Bill Hook: The key thing to understand is that this book is about Gordon's relationships with clients and the people he worked with. Throughout his life he has always managed to have people around who are inspired and influenced by him. It's amazing that he has had so many clients return multiple times for new projects. He's always been the sort of leader who people simply want to be in the room with. At the same time, there's a modesty that flows out of his work.

Andrew van Leeuwen: Gordon, what was challenging about having a book written about you?

Gordon Walker: I have an armor, and it's hard for me to engage with feelings. I'm struggling with that as I get older. I've never had anyone do anything quite this nice for me.

Gordon's Legacy and Publishing This Book Now
Jeffrey Murdock: Grant and Gordon are longtime friends and colleagues, so it's natural that Grant would tell Gordon's story. They even taught design studio together at the University of Washington. Our weekly book-team meetings were often driven by their recollections of the mid-20th-century architecture scene in the Northwest — it felt like reliving an amazing time in Seattle's architectural history.

AvL: It's also an apropos time to see Gordon's work as a measuring stick for where we've been and where we're going. There is a poetry in this work that has become a casualty to the challenges of doing architecture today.

There are so many factors competing for an architect's focus and bandwidth today that sticking to a system of beliefs is more important than ever. This book is a road map of the architectural beliefs respected by many in the Pacific Northwest.

Kelly Rodriquez: There are people in the world, in our communities and in our lives, who care immensely about their environments and the spaces in which they live. Gordon has been fortunate to have those people in his life.

I WANT YOUNGER ARCHITECTS TO BE INSPIRED BY WHAT THEY ARE DOING.

IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER WHETHER IT'S ARCHITECTURE, PROJECT MANAGEMENT, OR WRITING SPECIFICATIONS.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO BE INSPIRED.

GW: I recently bumped into Yale Lewis, who was the first tenant of the Maynard Building — I designed his office there in 1974. Now in his 80s, he has asked me to design a bunkhouse on a property he owns on Bainbridge Island. Similarly, I'm currently working on a residential project for Jim and Kathy Youngren, who I worked with over 40 years ago on a previous house. Former Seattle mayor Paul Schell was also a good friend and repeat client over the years. It all goes back to relationships.

**Takeaways from the Book for Younger Architects**
GW: I want younger architects to be inspired by what they are doing. It doesn't really matter whether it's architecture, project management, or writing specifications. It's important to be inspired.

BH: I think it's important that younger generations of architects not be influenced by everything that comes out in the latest magazines. Talk to your clients, learn about them and their lifestyles, see what's important to them.

Show them that the quality of space has an impact on one's life and how you view your life.

KR: My daughter, Gemma [Gordon's granddaughter], relayed a story to me about this past Thanksgiving at Gordon and his wife Sandie's place on Orcas Island. Gemma told me about a moment when her three-year-old cousin, Aila, was sitting on Gramps Gordon's lap at his drawing board, and Gordon was teaching her how to draw. There is a depth of understanding of who Gordon is and the skills, stories, and passion that he is imparting to his grandchildren that is becoming very clear to them. When Gemma reads this book, she will have an understanding of Gordon's life that she has observed and taken in through experience.

BH: There's a gorgeous line in Thucydides's *History of the Peloponnesian War:* Pericles is talking about the soldiers killed in the war, and he says that great men have the whole earth as their memorial, for their thoughts and deeds live on not in some
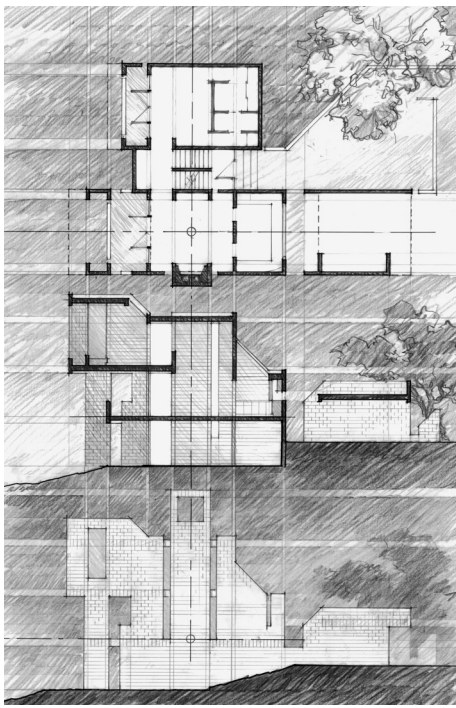
tangible form but woven into the fabric of others' lives. It's a beautiful line, and I think it's what happens with people like Gordon. We tell the story, and it's woven in, but we don't know what the cloth is, and we don't know what it's woven into.

AvL: This book isn't just about Gordon's work — it's also communicating how to be an architect. Being design conscious and living an architectural life is in everything a person does. It's in how you cook a meal, where you go for a holiday, and how you visit with friends. It's so much more than a portfolio of work or what you accomplish professionally.

JM: In a culture where each work of architecture seems to scream out for attention, there is so much for architecture students to learn from Gordon's approach. His careful attention to site, materiality, and craft has resulted in truly inspired, albeit quiet, designs that still convey meaning as richly today as when first constructed.

**Reception of the Work, Then and Now**
GH: I would have thought that the Raff house on Queen Anne, which is constructed of concrete masonry units, would have caused more controversy when it was built, but it was accepted

among a neighborhood of traditional craftsman-style homes. Since then it's become a point of pride in the neighborhood.

GW: The neighbors referred to it as "Fort Queen Anne" when it was completed.

AvL: Recent photographs of Gordon's projects show how much they've softened and acclimated to their surroundings simply from the accompanying vegetation filling in and maturing. A few of the projects, like the Smith Townhomes, are difficult to document now because the wisteria and other plants have filled in the trellises just as they were intended to. The vegetation has become as prominent as the building.
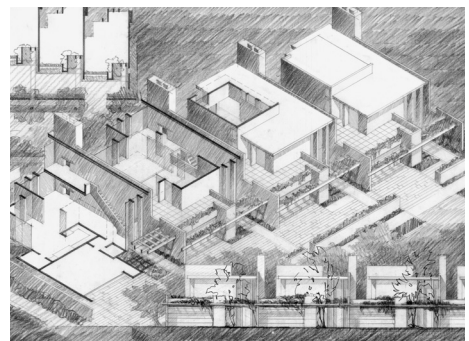
BH: Other projects are about to transform for different reasons. Hillclimb Court, a multifamily project in downtown Seattle, originally shielded itself from the adjacent Alaskan Way Viaduct that was built in the 1950s. Now with the viaduct slated for removal, the project will have the opportunity to open up to the waterfront.

On Revisiting the Work for the Book
GW: I wished that I had kept the drawings from many of my early projects, like my own first house in Kirkland, Washington. I was just a kid then and was too anxious to get on with the next project to save the drawings from the last one.

Above clockwise from left: Raff residence, Seattle, WA. Illustration by Bill Hook. / Raff residence, Seattle, WA. / Smith Townhouses, Seattle, WA. Illustration by Bill Hook. / Smith Townhouses, Seattle, WA.

Grant Hildebrand — architect, professor of architecture at the University of Washington for 40 years, and author of ten books on architecture — is a recipient of the university's Distinguished Teaching Award, the Governor's Writers' Award for work of literary merit and lasting value, and the CBE Distinguished Faculty Award for Lifetime Achievement.
Bill Hook practiced architecture for 15 years before launching a second career as an architectural illustrator. He has worked with Gordon Walker for over 30 years as both an architect and an illustrator. wghook.com

Jeffrey Murdock is an architectural designer and historic preservationist in Seattle.

Kelly Rodriguez is ARCADE's editor/ executive director.

Andrew van Leeuwen is an architect and an architectural photographer (avl.photo) in Seattle, where he is a partner at BUILD llc. He conducts a quarterly interview with architects and designers for ARCADE.

Gordon Walker is a 1962 graduate of the University of Idaho. He was cofounder of Olson Walker Architects (now Olson Kundig), worked with NBBJ in Seattle and San Francisco, and practiced in his own name for 12 years before joining Mithun as a consulting principal.

BH: We never trusted you with drawings because you'd take the originals out into the field even if it was raining. We'd get them back all folded up from being in your back pocket.

GH: But that's Gordon.

How Gordon's Work Changed over the Course of His Career
GH: With many well-known architects, you can see change over time and trace the growth step-by-step. But with Gordon, I've never seen that pattern. His work doesn't exhibit the same linear progeny. He reinvents every time around.

JM: Just as Gordon's work is not linear in its narrative quality, his own story is equally complicated. Sometimes we would meet to discuss a chapter that

felt complete, and Gordon would reveal some new "bombshell," sending us back to the drawing board.

AvL: The unfortunate state of design today is that architecture has to be sensationalized in order to be noticed. Gordon's work signifies a time when architecture was appreciated for its mastery without relying on unnecessary theatrics. ■

Above clockwise from left: Orcas Island cabin, Orcas Island, WA. / Hillclimb Court, Seattle, WA. / Whidbey Island residence, Whidbey Island, WA. / Lopez Island residence, Lopez Island WA.

DEATH BY INTERVIEW

By Ron van der Veen

I never signed up for this!
I'm so nervous I can smell my armpits!
My design should speak for itself!
Why am I groveling for work?
THIS IS NOT ARCHITECTURE!!!

I'm giving you a glimpse of how I felt 46 1/2 minutes ago. I was just about to walk into a 45-minute interview in front of a selection committee for a design commission that I'd die for (which would make it understandably difficult to actually execute). Yes, over my long career as an architect I've interviewed too many times to count, but this is the project I really want. It has the budget, it has the site, it has the sophisticated client, and it has ME … if we can win it.

The cold, raw reality of having to secure work is the ink stain on an architect's otherwise crisply laundered shirt of passion and craft. I don't recall one single architecture professor even hinting at this during my formative years in design school. And yet EVERYTHING seems to rest on "the win." Careers are launched, firms are propelled, reputations cemented, acclaim garnered, riches hoarded … all in 45 minutes.

The labor of winning work often starts years ahead of the actual interview with schmoozing the potential client. Yeah, this can get to the dreaded level of used-car salesmanship, so the principled architect must establish boundaries and rules before diving into this world. Of course, I know that for any potential client I am just one of a dozen other architects vying for the same attention, like a neglected puppy. Young architects: you are just gonna have to learn to do this, because we veterans know that if the first time you hear about a *request for qualifications* is when it's published, you are too late.

Yes, about the RFQ. This is the first step in any formal selection process, in which all interested design teams are asked to submit an SOQ: a *statement of qualifications*. I have personally worked on about 2.5 million of these and have come to the conclusion that there must be some universal central file of questions asked, because they are all so redundant. My biggest challenge is answering questions like "Describe your design or management approach," without sounding like an adult in a Charlie Brown cartoon: "Wah, wah, wah, wah …"

One aspect of the SOQ that I still enjoy is the cover letter because I give myself two personal challenges:

How far into the letter can I go WITHOUT starting to talk about myself (or my firm)?

How far into the letter can I go WITHOUT using an architectural cliché?

Okay, so you've spent years getting to know the client, you've been to all sorts of events to schmooze, you've donated money, volunteered for activities, allowed yourself to get emotionally drawn into the project and the organization, and now you've focused all of that gained passion into creating an absolutely convincing SOQ, which you've barely submitted on time because the nearby Kinko's printer broke down.

And then you wait … for the *short list*.

Making the short list is a bit like getting dessert before dinner, and you get a quick sugar high, but it doesn't last long. This is especially true if you find out that up to five other firms are also on the list. At this point, I usually start my self-doubt musings, such as, "We can maybe beat firms B and D, but we've never won against A, C, and E! We are losers!!!!"

There are typically a few weeks to prepare for an interview—enough time to lose about 10 pounds worrying about the competition. How the hell did they get shortlisted? Who is on their team? Will they build a model? What kind of graphics will they have? Is their project manager a smooth talker or inescapably grumpy like ours? Will they show a design (you know you are damned if you do and damned if you don't!)? What is their secret weapon for winning, and how do we counteract it? Why do they always beat us?

What often unnerves me while preparing for an interview is the understanding that so much rests on 45 short minutes in what has to be an almost perfect engagement. And I mean "almost perfect" as in really, really, really great. I know our competition is going to be formidable because they have as much resting on these ridiculous presentations as we do, and they probably made an awesome model, developed the actual building program, already designed three versions of the facility, gave thousands of dollars to the foundation, married the CEO's son or daughter, remembered the birthday of every single person who works for the organization, went on ski vacations with one of the VPs, and hired a presentation coach to prep for the interview. Yeah, we are losers!!!

So, back to the present: As I mentioned, I just walked out of the interview for this commission. I'm exhausted but relieved. Our team gave it everything we had, and we all feel like it was the best presentation of our lives. And that is the problem. I usually figure the better the interview, the more likely we are to NOT get the project. Recently, during one interview, a panelist actually stood up and assured us that we would win the project,

WE ARE LOSERS!!!

and then I found out the next day that we didn't. There must be some obscure law of quantum physics dictating these seemingly contradictory outcomes.

As most interview veterans know, a team usually doesn't lose from a huge screw up. It is death by a thousand tiny cuts. We often get a debrief from the selection committee when we are not awarded a commission, and we hear these similar comments as though they come from the same central file:

1. It was such a hard decision. In the end it was like flipping a coin.
2. You came in a close second.
3. Your presentation was excellent. We just thought the other team was a little bit better.
4. We could have picked anyone for this project and been happy.
5. You really didn't lose, you just didn't win. Please submit for the next project!
6. Wah, wah, wah, wah …

Forty-six and a half minutes ago, I put years of business development and emotions on the line to win this tremendous commission. Do they know that? Do they care what this means to me and my firm? Did they smell my sweaty armpits? Well, they told us how great the interview went. The best of the day! One committee member even announced he wanted us to win the commission. You know what that means?

We are losers!!! ■

Ron van der Veen, FAIA, is our esteemed Side Yard columnist and a principal at NAC Architecture. Ron has continued to assure ARCADE that all of his stories are at least semiautobiographical. In this case, the incident of not winning an important commission after being told he would occurred the day before he wrote this article.

Page 66 and above: Ron sweating his armpits out.

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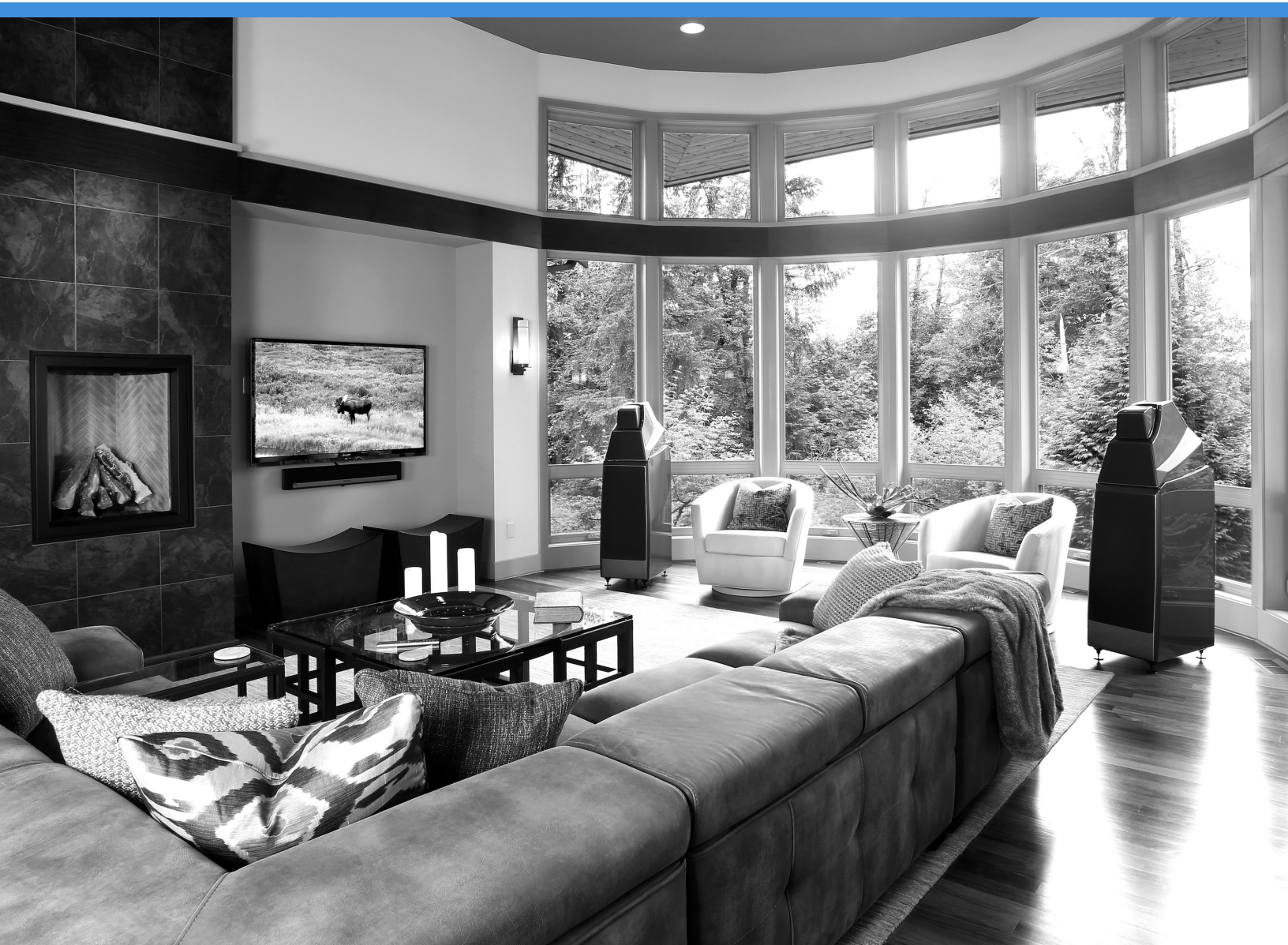
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